00062045

00062045

Digitized with financial assistance from

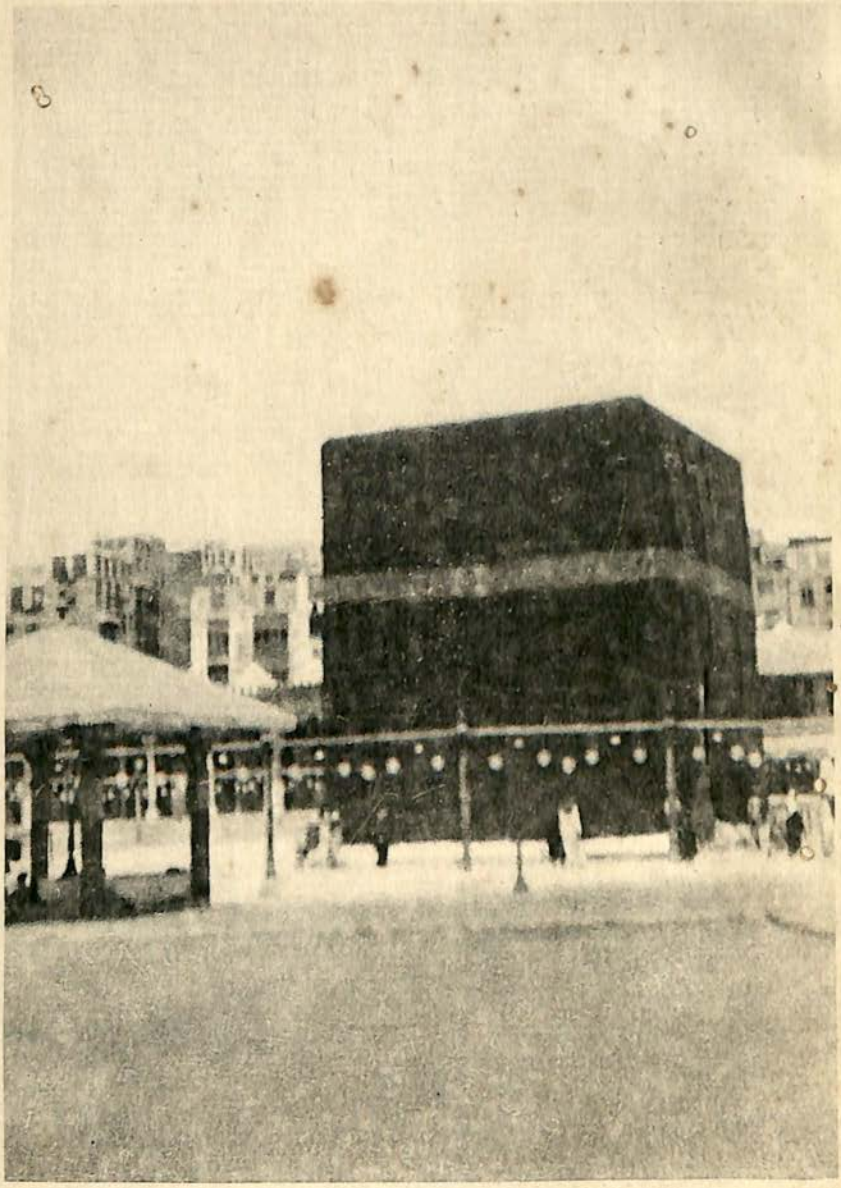
HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018

THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA



The Kaaba at Mekka

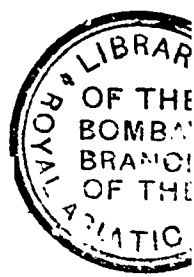
From a photograph by the Author, September 1925.

THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA

By
ELDON RUTTER

VOLUME I

62045
ac.



RX-K-10

LONDON & NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, LTD.

First Published October 1928

915.5
RUT/HOL
62045

Printed in Great Britain at
The Westminster Press
411a Harrow Road
London, W.9

PREFACE

IN the month of May, 1925, I was in Cairo, having determined upon making a journey into Arabia. I planned to visit Mekka, to perform the rites of the Muhammadan pilgrimage there; and having accomplished that, to visit El Medîna, where lies the tomb of Muhammad.

At this time war was in active progress throughout the province or kingdom of El Hijâz. In the month of Safar, 1343 A.H.—September, 1924—the forces of the Sultân Abdul Azîz Ibn Sa'ûd, sovereign lord of Nejd and of Eastern Arabia, had occupied the great upland oasis of Et-Tâif, which lies in a wide hollow among the jagged crests of Jebel Kura, at a distance of fifteen or twenty hours mule-journey to the south-eastward of Mekka. Having sacked this town and massacred a large number of its defenceless inhabitants, Ibn Sa'ûd's Wahhâbîs, clothed in the ihrâm or pilgrim garb, had subsequently entered Mekka, which they occupied without bloodshed or violence. The Hâshimite King of the Hijâz, El Husayn, had abdicated the throne in favour of his son, the Sharîf Ali; and the latter, having retreated to Jidda, was besieged there by the Wahhâbî forces. El Medîna and its port, Yanbua, were still in the hands of the Hâshimite Government, but they too were invested by the besieging arms of Ibn Sa'ûd. All the Hijâzi ports were closed as far as the passage of normal traffic was concerned—El Wejh, Yanbua, and Jidda were besieged; and El Lîth and El Gunfuda, to the southward of Jidda, being already in the occupa-

tion of the Wahhâbîs, had been placed under blockade by the Hâshimite Amîr. The active blockade precautions consisted of spasmodic visits by a decrepit steam launch armed with a small gun; and, from all I could gather, it struck me that it would be easier to flout this "blockade" than to steal through the Wahhâbî patrols about Jidda or Yanbua. The former was, in fact, the course which I ultimately pursued.

The Egyptian Government, having obtained the fatwa (judicial decision) of the 'ulemâ* to the effect that the pilgrimage was not obligatory upon the Muslims while the roads to Mekka were in the contentious occupation of hostile armies, had decided against sending, that year, its annual mission with the covering for the Kaaba and the mahmal. In consequence of this decision, the timid Egyptians to a man shunned the danger of attempting the Hajj. "If we cannot go this year we will go another year to Mekka, if God wills." "God does not impose an obligation upon His slaves save that which it is within their power to perform." Such were the philosophical and pious remarks which one heard in the mosques, the coffee houses, and the bazaars of Cairo.

For my part, I was probably better able than my Egyptian friends to interpret correctly the meaning of the word "war" as between two princes in the economically poorest country in the world, and to gauge its significance as a deterrent force to a neutral and sufficiently determined traveller. There was little to be learnt in Cairo, however, which would be likely to assist one in forming a definite plan of action. I therefore decided to push my way forward from point to point, in whatever manner circumstances might seem

* The religious heads of the community.

to favour or to dictate, until I should reach my objective.

A short time before the day which I had appointed for leaving Cairo, I had followed to the grave-side the bier of one who had been in life a singularly amiable youth of a manly frankness of disposition somewhat unusual in town Arabs, one Nûr ed-Dîn Shargâwi, a native of Mekka, who was to have been my companion in my Arabian travels. I had never doubted that Nûr-ed-Dîn would be hard to replace, and I was not mistaken. As a result of his loss at a time so close to the date of my departure from Egypt, I was obliged to set out quite alone, and to travel alone save for chance acquaintances whom I met in the way.

In transliterating Arabic words into the Latin character, I have, in most cases, followed the conventional spelling of words familiar to the English reader; and have endeavoured to present unfamiliar words in such a form that an English-speaking person, reading them aloud, may pronounce them nearly as the original. This has involved me in a good deal of experiment; and, in the result, it will be observed by Arabic scholars that the same Arabic letter is not invariably represented by a constant English equivalent. I have rendered the word "Allah" as "Ollawh" in two places only, where I wish to emphasise the true pronunciation of this word in the mouths of the Arabs.

E. R.

GLOSSARY

emîr	Commander, prince
caftân	Egyptian robe with long sleeves, open at the front: worn under the jubba
cantâr	About 1 cwt.
casîda	Romantic tale of religious interest
delul	Fast riding-camel
fellahîn (sing. fellâh)	Peasants
hajj	Pilgrimage
hâjj, hâjji	Pilgrim
in shâ Allah	If God wills
ḳibla	Opposite point: direction towards which the Muslim turns in prayer, i.e. the Great Mosque at Mekka
mâ shâ Allah	That which God wills (must be)! used to denote admiration
mejlis	Assembly
riyâl	Silver coin
riyâl mejîdi (Turkish)	About 2 shillings
riyâl franza (Maria Teresa dollar)	About 3 shillings
riyâl masri (Egyptian)	About 4 shillings
shaykh	Elder, chief, professor, old man
yâ akhi	O my brother!

LESS KNOWN PLACE NAMES

Abtah	الأبطح	Judayyida	الجديّدة
ʻAgîg	العقيق	Khandarîsa	الخندريسة
ʻAynîya	العينيّة	Khuls	خلص
Balât	البلاط	Khurga	الخرقة
Birk	برك	Kurr	الكرّ
Dôga	دوقة	Mathnâ	المثنى
Duhbân	دهبان	Muâbda	المعابدة
Falg	الفلق	Muddaâ	المدّعى
Gahm	القحم	Mudhaylif	المضيلف
Garâra	القرارة	Nagâ	النقا
Gashâshîya	القشاشيّة	Najîʻa	نجيعة
Gaym	القيم	Rakûba	الركوبة
Ghazza	الغزّة	Sâh	الساح
Gudayra	القديرة	Sâha	الساحة
Gudhayma	القضيمة	Shaddâd	شدّاد
Hada	الهداء	Shahrîya	الشهريّة
Hajla	الحجلة	Shubayka	الشبيكة
Halaga	الحلقة	Sulb	صلب
ʻImaq	عمق	Suwayga	السويقة
Jarwal	جرول	ʻUgushîya	العقشيّة
Jiyâd	جياد	Wajha	الوجهة
Jowdharîya	الجوضريّة	Yebba	يبّى

CONTENTS

I	Suez to Massowa	*Page* 1
II	At Massowa	15
III	Massowa to El Gahm	22
IV	El Gahm	35
V	El Gaḥm to Birk	45
VI	Birk to El Gunfuda	57
VII	El Gunfuda to El Lîth and Wâdi Yelamlam	71
VIII	Wâdi Yelamlam to Mekka	95
IX	Preliminary Rites of the Pilgrimage	104
X	Geographical and Historical Notes	115
XI	Topographical Description of Mekka	124
XII	ʻArafa	141
XIII	Mina	168
XIV	The Mekkan's Daily Life	188
XV	Description of the Kaaba	209
XVI	Encounters	228
XVII	Description of the Haram of Mekka	248
XVIII	Places of Visitation	270
XIX	Departure from Mekka	295

MAPS AND PLANS

Mekka *facing page* 116

The road between Mekka and 'Arafa 154

The Haram of Mekka 252

مكة المكرمة

I

SUEZ TO MASSOWA

IT was midday on the 20th of May, 1925. Looking out of the railway carriage window I could see, some miles ahead, a large number of cubic objects of differing sizes strewn or flung haphazard upon the desert sand. They might have been gigantic packing cases—many of them white, some pink, some yellow. They were the houses of Suez.

In a few minutes more the train was crawling slowly alongside the platform, and as it came to a stop I called to a shabby-looking person who was standing there dressed in a gallabîya—a garment similar to the English night-shirt—a jacket, and a tarbûsh. He was one of the touts who are never absent from the principal railway stations of Egypt—and very useful they are. The Egyptian tout will do, or agree to do, anything you like. As far as history tells us he has never attempted to steal the Great Pyramid, but that may be because he has never had the matter proposed to him.

The tout, upon observing me, approached with alacrity and entered the railway compartment. I was dressed in the style of an Egyptian effendi; that is to say I wore an European suit of clothes with a tarbûsh as headgear.

"Peace be upon you," said he. "How is your presence?"

"Well. Praise be to God," I replied.

"Welcome!" said he cordially.

"Well met to you," I rejoined.

The tout, who looked disreputable, had been followed into the train by another little man who looked extremely disreputable. The latter, at a sign from the former, promptly shouldered my saddle-bags which were my only luggage. The saddle-bags contained several books, all of them being Arabic, including a Korân and a history of Mekka; a small camera, a compass, a pocket aneroid, and a supply of clothes of the style worn by religious shaykhs in Egypt—cotton shirt (gamîs), cotton drawers (libâs or sirwâl), cotton gown (gallabîya), cloth robe (jubba), and turban cloth (shâl). I carried a small revolver in my pocket, and a supply of cartridges in a belt worn under my clothing.

"I want a hâjji lodging-house, O my brother," I said.

"I know you do," replied my new friend affably. "Come to us; I will show you. Your presence is a hâjji, not so?"

"Yes, and I want to travel without delay," I replied.

"Ask blessings on the Prophet," said he in order to stop my speaking so that he himself might have a clear field. The lower classes in Egypt make use of the Korânic injunction to "ask blessings and the salutation of peace on the Prophet" for this purpose. In the midst of an argument one will say to another, "Ask blessings on the Prophet!" and while his companion, as in duty bound, says "O God! bless him," the first man is able to vociferate his point without interruption.

"O God! bless him," I said in response to the tout's prompting.

"We want you to be pleased, if God wills," he said.

"That it is which concerns us. We are your servants. There are no steamers to Jidda because of the war. It is not possible that you go to Jidda nor Yanbua nor El Wejh, but some Turks and Moors went down to Massowa, and from Massowa they went to El Gunfuda." This is on the Arabian coast about half-way between Jidda and El Hodayda.

While he had been talking we were walking through the quiet little old-fashioned town. The guide now stopped before a ramshackle two-storeyed house. We entered the low doorway saying "Bismillah, In the Name of God," and, proceeding through a passage, the guide led the way up a rickety flight of stairs. Arrived at the top, he turned.

"You like to go into this room with the Moors, or take a room for the one of you?" he asked in a discreet voice, the door of the Moorish stronghold being ajar.

"There is a woman with them: I heard her voice," I said in a slightly shocked tone. "Give me a room to myself, O my brother."

"Present!" said he. "We want to see you pleased. As long as you are pleased, we are pleased. You are a pilgrim in the way of God, and we are your servants."

"God bless you," I said.

"In the Name of God," said he, pushing at a door of a style which is more usually found in garden fences or in barns than in the interiors of houses.

"Here is the best room in the house, O Effendi! Do me the favour! Enter!" he said with the magnanimous confidence of one who offers rare delights.

The room, some eight feet square, was half-filled by an iron bedstead with wooden boards upon it but no mattress. A piece of rush matting on the floor completed its furniture. A window, or square glassless aperture,

two feet square and barred with iron, looked onto the flat sunlit roofs of many one-storeyed hovels.

"The water is there," proceeded my host, pointing down the passage, "and anything you want—food, or drink, or things from the market—we will bring them —anything."

"Good!" I said. "If you will ask about boats to El Gunfuda, I shall be favoured."

"With all pleasure," he replied. "This is the porter who carried your luggage," he continued apologetically.

I placed a piece of money in the porter's outstretched hand. The hand, however, remained outstretched and the porter expostulated:

"We carried your luggage, and its weight is sixty Cantars, from the station to the end of the world. What is this?"

The tout looked blandly on. I gave the porter another half-piastre.

"Go, O my brother. Allah make it easy for you," I said.

"For you and for us, if it please Allah," said the porter as he shuffled away.

"Now you would like to pray—naturally," said the tout as he approached the door to go out. "Any service you want, we are ready—any service."

"Good," I said. "God bless you."

By good fortune, a little Italian steamer was due to sail for El Cosayr, Port Sudan, and Massowa at daylight the next morning. Refusing the tout's offer of his company and assistance, I went and took a second-class passage to Massowa.

Early the next morning I left Suez by train for Port Tewfik. Suez is a quiet rambling old town with low

picturesque little houses, and here and there little green squares of public garden. For two periods of a month or so each year the town is crowded with life, while the hâjjis are going to Mekka and again when they return. Usually some fifteen thousand Egyptians go to Mekka annually, but this year there were none. The town lies on the desert at about two miles distance to the westward of Port Tewfik, which is at the entrance of the Suez Canal. A railway and a road, laid on a narrow causeway across the shallow head of the Gulf of Suez, connect the two towns.

On boarding the steamer, I found the Moors from my lodging-house already installed there as deck passengers. Two of them were arguing stressfully with a learned-looking shaykh wearing gold-rimmed spectacles. My tout, who was also there, informed me that the spectacled one was the "Chief Interpreter" of Suez.

Apparently the man who had brought the Moors' luggage down to the wharf wanted to charge them more than they were willing to pay; and when they refused he appealed to the Chief Interpreter—according to plan.

This redoubtable one handled the matter with complete ease, giving an exhibition of interpreting worthy of the greatest admiration. He first preached the Moors a fatherly sermon, taking as his subject the sacredness of the ordinance of pilgrimage, upon which they were now embarked. Skilfully and piously he stressed the important point that the more money they spent while "in the way of God" the more acceptable would be their pilgrimage and the greater their eternal reward.

"Your good works while in the Hajj are worth many times more than good works at other times, O my

brethren!" he concluded, "and your recording angels will write them down to you accordingly. Pay forty piastres to this poor cart-driver. He is a good man." Here he gently squeezed the coins out of the unwilling fist of the leader of the Moors. Then, wise physician, seeing, from the wry faces of his patients, that the medicine of his interpreting was bitter to their taste, he pulled each of them quickly round, one after another by the shoulder, so that they faced in the direction of the Kibla (Mekka), and raising his open hands palms upwards before him, he made supplication to God:

"O God! bless the Muslim men and the Muslim women.

"O God! bless the pious men and the pious women.

"O God! bless those who give alms from the provision which Thou hast appointed to them.

"O God! bless those who strive in Thy way.

"O God! bless the hâjjis from Egypt, and from Turkey, and from the Sudan, and from India—from the Eastern places of the earth and from its western confines, and especially the Moors.

"O God! Grant that the pilgrimage of Thy pious slaves, these Moors, be acceptable unto Thee."

This was the spoonful of jam after the dose of bitter physic, and at the end of every sentence the Moors said "O God! Âmîn!"

The average Oriental, although he will frequently accuse an absent person of hypocrisy, seems to be quite incapable of distinguishing it from real piety.

The steamer sailed before noon in a sea as smooth as a sheet of blue glass. Behind us, to the northward, lay the desert—the sky above it turned to yellow by the powerful glare reflected from its naked face. In the far

distance, to the eastward, the mountains of Sinai loomed dimly behind the shimmering heat-haze which rose from the intervening plain. On our right hand, to westward, the massive pink-and-purple buttresses of the mountains bordering the Gulf rose sheer out of the rich blue-green somnolence of the waters. Nature alone may wear such contrasts of vivid colour without jarring the sense.

My only fellow-passenger in the second-class saloon was an Italian. A man of a pleasant enough temper, his life was apparently made up of a series of long spells of pearl-shell trading in Massowa, and of short spells of pleasure-making in Paris, which used up the proceeds of the trading spells.

The chief man among the Moors, a merchant of Algiers, was accompanied by his wife, who was swathed in white linen and closely veiled. She sat or lay on the hatch-cover among the half-a-dozen men with no sign of embarrassment. I had noticed her standing outside the lodging-house in Suez on the previous day, watching two Egyptians at a table playing draughts. Her husband ordered her peremptorily to go inside, but she remained as she was without moving an inch. The Moor, in low tones, said with a bitter face: "There is no power and no strength save in God," and, sitting down resignedly on a chair before the door, lit a cigarette.

On the following afternoon the steamer arrived at El Cosayr, where a few stores were landed. Westward of El Cosayr the Nile flows nearer to the Red Sea coast than at any other point of its course. Kena, on the Nile, is about a hundred miles from this little port, and, from time immemorial, Egyptian grain has been carried on camels from thence to El Cosayr for shipment

to Arabia. This is also one of the old hâjj routes. Pilgrims from Egypt and the Sudan, and from all North Africa and many more-distant parts of the Muhammadan world, would gather at Kena and the adjacent villages of Cûs and Caft, and passing the desert by camel to El Cosayr or Ídâb, would cross the Red Sea in dhows to El Wejh or Yanbua or Jidda.

The Moorish traveller, Ibn Jubayr, who performed the pilgrimage in 580 A.H., gives a vivid account of the perils which pilgrims encountered on this route—chiefly on account of the rascality of the Egypto-Berberine tribe of Jubâh which inhabits these deserts. Another Moor, Ibn Battûta, a prince among travellers, also attempted to pass this way in the eighth century of the Hijra, but was obliged to turn back from Ídâb because the cut-throat tribesmen had destroyed all the dhows, in the course of a quarrel between themselves and a Turkish expedition.

The little collection of stone-built houses which is El Cosayr stands on a rocky shore unrelieved by vegetation. It is backed by craggy hills of bare rock, and in the far distance to the southward loom the peaks of a lofty range of mountains.

We heard from a boatman here that Jidda was open, as the Amîr Ali had surrendered the town to the Wahhâbîs. This proved to be false, but at the time it cheered the hâjjis considerably.

Two days later we reached Port Sudan, where we found a sand-storm blowing. The world is a very desolate place when one is in a sand-storm. In place of the blue sky and the distant view there is nothing but impenetrable dust. For the time being one is in a living tomb. Though the earth be lightly packed about you, yet it is there. You are completely entombed.

At Port Sudan is the finest harbour on the Red Sea. Its advantages were realised only quite recently, and it has now completely superseded Suâkin as the principal port of the Sudan. The Arabs call Port Sudan "Shaykh Barûd," after a prominent shaykh who diéd there on his way to Mekka. His tomb, adorned with weird flags and surrounded by a short wooden fence, still stands prominently on a little sandy eminence at the entrance to the harbour. It contrasts very strangely with the immense iron girders of a modern electrical coaling apparatus, which towers up immediately behind it on the massive stone wharf.

The next day, May 25th, our steamer reached Massowa—the port of Eritrea. This town is situated on a small island connected with the mainland by a narrow causeway, half a mile long, which carries a road and railway. Massowa is a primitive collection of stone and mud houses, which have been built without any attempt at order. There are no metalled roads, and the streets are unlighted at night.

Having landed, I told the Arab who was carrying my saddle-bags that I was a hâjji and wished to sail for Arabia.

"Good! There are hâjjis here," he replied, as he continued to thread his way round the corners of houses.

Presently he entered a gateway leading into the courtyard of a house which appeared to be still in the hands of the builders. A heap of cement and some bricks and planks of wood encumbered the courtyard and the lower rooms. I followed the man up a winding stair and, arrived at the top, he deposited my saddle-bags in a room which was empty save for a large tin trunk and a basketful of cooking utensils and other

household apparatus. The door of this room led on to a verandah on which, sitting on a spread carpet, were two Arabs wearing a form of the Mekkan dress.

I gave the porter his hire, and at once proceeded to join the Arabs.

"Peace be upon you," I said.

"And upon you be peace and the mercy of God and His blessings," they rejoined. "Do us the favour! Sit!"

I sat down on the carpet before them.

Both the Arabs were lean, large-eyed and light skinned—of a yellow hue. One of them, who was smoking a highly scented sickly smelling cigarette, appeared to be about forty-five or fifty years old, and from the likeness between them it was fairly evident that he was the father of the other. The old man was dressed in a thawb (gown) of lâss, a kind of artificial silk, pale yellow in colour; and his head was swathed in the folds of a bright white-and-yellow silken shawl. Over the thawb he wore a grey waistcoat and coat of European type. A massive gold watch-chain stretched from pocket to pocket of his waistcoat, and he took an early opportunity after my arrival to investigate the time—nonchalantly pulling out a great gold watch which had two faces, one for Arabic time—by which the day ends at sunset which is twelve o'clock—and one for European time. On each of his hands there were three or four jewelled rings. He was a quiet dignified man in manner, beginning to shrivel with approaching age. His teeth, though incomplete in number, were, taken *en bloc*, of considerable value—many of them being of gold. Having come to the end of his cigarette, Abdul Majîd, for that was his name, immediately lighted another. These cigarettes were longer than the average, and very thin. When I men-

daciously praised their disgusting scent he told me, with an air of gentlemanly importance, that they came from Stambûl—he himself having but recently left the capital of the Othmânlîs.

The son was merely an inferior copy of the father. The father being so expensive a work it was natural that the new publication should be a cheap edition. He wore no gold, neither did he smoke. His thawb was of white linen, and over it he wore a jubba or robe of yellow artificial silk, and on his head a turban of that material. The Muslim is forbidden to wear silk or gold. The lâss or artificial silk mentioned above is produced from the pith of a tree which grows principally in Java, and although its use has been sanctioned by the Muhammadan jurists, there are a number of the more puritanical Muslims who disapprove of its use on account of its close resemblance to the product of the Chinese worm.

"Is your purpose the House?" asked the old man, meaning the House of God—the Kaaba. Having sat down on the carpet, I took their right hands in turn.

"If God wills," I replied.

"I am chartering a steamer to carry my goods to El Lîth," he said through the scented smoke. "If you like you may travel in her."

"When will she start?" I asked.

"If God wills—after two days or three," he replied, " but the matter is upon God."

"May He be praised and exalted," said Hasan, the merchant's son—in which exclamation I joined.

While I sat looking contemplatively out over the blue water of the bay to a great dark mountain which rises out of the sea to the southward, footsteps became audible of people ascending the stairs.

The two Mekkans looked calmly towards the stair-head; and turning my head I saw the Moorish merchant, followed by his white-shrouded wife and the other three Moors, coming onto the verandah. Leading them were two dark young men, flashily dressed in European clothes and tarbûshes.

"God keep you alive," said Abdul Majîd.

"Peace be upon you," said the two young men, who then proceeded to shepherd the Moors into one of the empty rooms.

Presently, when the argument about payment of the porters had been concluded, the two effendis came and sat with us on the carpet. They shook hands all round.

"These are mutawwifs" (pilgrim guides), said Abdul Majîd. "They will arrange your matter in Mekka."

The young men shot me quick glances, appraising me and endeavouring to estimate my paying-power, and then looked down to the carpet without speaking. Good manners before the merchant, their senior in years and station, enjoined silence. Possibly, too, they thought it would be to their advantage to leave the initiative to me. I thought they might be useful to me, and determined to speak to them about the matter later.

One of these two was called Abdulla. His age was something between twenty-five and thirty years. Of medium height, with regular features, a large black moustache and clean-shaven chin, he was plainly as vain as an empty-headed girl. His eyes, though they often smiled, were never pleasing—their expression being always shallow and meaningless.

The other was called Jamîl. Also of middle height but darker than Abdulla, his cast of features plainly told that he was more than half Indian. The expression

of his eyes was a cunning thoughtfulness, and he seldom smiled. His age may have been thirty or slightly more.

Later, as I sat on a rug in the room where my saddle-bags had been placed, these two came in.

"Welcome, O Ahmad Effendi!" they said as they sat down. "We have seen the captain of a sanbûq (dhow)," proceeded Abdulla, "and he will carry us across to El Lîth."

"But," I said, "Abdul Majîd the merchant has chartered a steamer. We can better go in that."

"Steamer!" exclaimed Jamîl. "There is no steamer here which can travel. There are two launches whose machinery is too broken to work. Wallah! broken. It will take months to repair them."

This I afterwards found to be true. The Arab usually talks of his project as though it were *fait accompli*, just as the qualities of anything of which he approves are invariably of superlative degree.

I decided that, as I should probably experience some difficulty in engaging a suitable servant here at short notice, I would suggest to these two Mekkans that they should arrange all the details for my journey to Mekka in exchange for a sum of money.

After nearly an hour's stressful conference, in the course of which Abdulla and Jamîl expressed for each other and for me every emotion from murderous hate to fraternal love, it was finally decided that they should "carry" me from Massowa to Mekka for the sum of ten pounds. Four pounds was to be paid at Massowa; three pounds at El Lîth, a village on the Arabian shore four camel stages from Mekka; and the remaining three pounds in Mekka. They were to provision and mount me, and to house me at halting-places.

The contract was written out on two pieces of paper, one of which the Mekkans signed, while I signed the other.

This was done in the presence of Hasan, the son of Abdul Majîd. The papers having been exchanged, the contract was ratified in a fervid shaking of hands. I extracted from the pocket of a belt which was hidden under my clothes, reluctantly and one by one, four golden sovereigns. These I handled regretfully for a moment and then handed them over, one by one, to Jamîl—counting them distinctly as I did so.

Being Semites, they could understand and respect my apparent sorrow at being parted from my money. The fact that it was to themselves that I was parting with it doubtless made their sympathy only the more disinterested.

The transaction was then hallowed by Hasan's repeating the Fâtiha or opening chapter of the Korân, at the end of which everybody said "Amîn!" The words of the Fâtiha are:—

> "In the Name of God, the Very Merciful, the Merciful. Praise to God, Lord of all creatures. The Compassionate, the Merciful. Ruler of the Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship, and of Thee we beg succour. Guide us in the right way—the way of those upon whom Thou hast conferred grace; of those with whom Thou art not angered; and of those who do not go astray."

"What is your nationality, O Hâjj Ahmad?" asked Abdulla kindly.

"My origin is from Damascus," I replied, "but I have lived long in Egypt."

II

AT MASSOWA

LIFE at Massowa was a lazy and comfortless existence. All day the flaming sunlight blazed down, bleaching the vivid colours of sea and mountains many shades paler than they were at morning and evening. Outside, the white dusty lanes lay silent in a heat so great that their whiteness might almost have been the manifestation of incandescence. Within the house even a tiled floor and thick walls could not greatly mitigate the panting oppression—so still and stagnant was the air.

Abdulla and Jamîl were not discontented. They were arranging the business of hiring berths in a dhow for ourselves and the Moors. For this purpose we would go, after the sunset prayer, to a succession of coffee houses. Sitting on a bench before some ramshackle hovel, we would sip what was apparently water which had been cooked too suddenly, and so had burned and turned black. In order to remedy the bitterness which this mode of cooking water engenders, some sugar had been added to it. While we sipped, with signs of intense satisfaction, Abdulla would inquire of neighbour bibbers as to that day's news of dhows arrived and those expected to sail.

Our two youths sold their European suits and their tarbûshes in the market-place, and resumed the turban and thawb, or gown, of Mekka. I donned somewhat similar dress.

By day we would sit on our blankets on the tiled floor while Abdulla cooked food on a primus stove. Or we talked, prayed, ate, or walked in the shabby market-place. Here everything was of the poorest. The furniture of the shops was made of dismembered packing cases, and the curtains had once been sacks. Along the stifling crowded wharf, carts of merchandise were eternally being dragged and pushed by teams of coolies instead of horses.

"Yâ Nabînâ!" (O our Prophet!) sings the leader of the gang, and from the sweating team comes the refrain: "Sollaynâ!" (We have prayed.)

The natives of Massowa are rather short in stature, and very thin, but well formed. Their colour is a very dark brown, frequently approaching nearly to black, and most of them wear a tuft of black beard. They are by descent a mixture of the Arab with the Takrûni, the Galla, the Dankal, and other races of the African sea-board and Abyssinia. The current language is Arabic, which is well-spoken here—the dialect being closely akin to the Hijâzi.

As we sat in the covered verandah of our house, we could see, away on the far southern side of the bay, a great mass of barren rock, coloured with dark mellow shades of brown and purple. Lighter streaks were visible where the sun-lit chines of the northern spurs dropped down to the sea. In the foreground was the sea of aquamarine with vivid green patches over the shallows. Floating in the middle of this sea of green and blue was a little island, thickly wooded with green shrubs on its seaward side, and trailing off in a long streak of golden sand—like the tail of a comet. The scene was bedazzled with the incessant shimmering heat-blaze.

My companions had heard that the Sharîf Ali had a gunboat watching the ports south of Jidda. All sorts of news was constantly in circulation, as every dhow coming from the Arabian side brought Mekkans who were fleeing from the straitness of war conditions and the uncomfortable puritanism of the Wahhâbîs. Apparently it was to be a case of "touch and go" getting into Arabia, with the possibility of being interned at Jidda as prisoners of war.

Whenever our mutawwifs spoke of their efforts to procure for us passages on a dhow, the Moorish merchant, Muhammad, becoming solicitous for the comfort of his wife, pressed them to wait a day or two in order to see if Abdul Majîd was successful in chartering a steamer in which we might travel.

Abdulla and Jamîl preferred a dhow, as they would make more profit out of the "squeeze," or brokerage, which it was their habit to put upon every transaction in which they had a hand.

"It is better to go in a steamer—a reliable thing," said the Moor. "Who knows when we shall reach El Lîth in a dhow? Perhaps we shall miss the Hajj."

Abdulla brought religion into the argument as usual, saying, "A sanbûq is as a steamer—all is one. Is not everything under the command of God?"

"All is under God's command," assented the Moor. "But why, O Abdulla! have you never travelled in a dhow before, if a dhow is as good as a steamer?"

"If you do not believe that all things are under the command of God, your faith is not complete to perform the Hajj," said Abdulla, getting ruffled.

"Never mind!" I said. "Perhaps the learned Abdulla will teach us all somewhat of religious matters in the way to Mekka."

Abdulla composed his countenance to becoming gravity.

"If God wills," he said.

His opinion of himself was too exalted for him to suspect sarcasm. He was a good specimen of the average Mekkan mutawwif. Ignorant of his religion in all save its outward forms, and of all other learning, he had travelled over half Europe with nothing in the way of intellectual food save coffee-house gossip. He had no copy of the Korân, or of any other book, in his bag; and his talk was all of money and food—interspersed with obscene jests.

The two of them, Abdulla and Jamîl, frequently borrowed a small mirror which I had in my saddle-bag.

"Where is that little mirror of yours, Hâjj Ahmad," one of them would say. "It is a good mirror but a trifle small." Then they would pass and re-pass the mirror to each other and twirl their moustaches in it, turning their heads from side to side, with absorbed eyes ever on the glass. They seemed to be taking an affectionate farewell of their moustaches and making the most of them while they could, as it was known that the Wahhâbîs banned long moustaches, and they would be obliged to crop them small before they set foot in El Hijâz.

One morning a fierce quarrel broke out between these two worthies. It appeared that Jamîl had spread his blanket so that one extremity of it overlapped the blanket of Abdulla. Over this gross infringement of boundary rights they broke out into verbal warfare of the most vindictive description. For nearly an hour the battle raged, but the point at issue was apparently far too important for either side to relinquish his rights save with death. The air seemed still charged with

venomous mutterings of the aftermath when Abdulla turned to me.

"Me and Jamîl have broken partnership," he said. "We cannot travel together. So our contract with you is also void."

"Silence!" I said. "And fear God!"

"Finished," he said again. "We cannot travel together."

"Then I will take the money which I gave you again," I said.

Abdulla did not answer, and presently he and Jamîl went separately outside the room. I heard the voice of Hasan, the son of the Mekkan merchant, Abdul Majîd, speaking to them, and soon afterwards they re-entered the room together. Abdulla's hand rested on Jamîl's shoulder. They were apparently faster friends than ever. Abdulla later confided to me that all the Mekkans are quick-tempered, but that "their hearts are good."

On the fourth night after my arrival at Massowa, as I lay on the roof between sleeping and waking, the mutawwifs came up to arrange their beds. Accompanying them was a native of Africa of the Dankal race, whom I found to be the captain of the dhow on which we subsequently embarked. The Moors were already lying on the roof.

"O Hâjj Muhammad!" said Abdulla. "We have found a sanbûq, and it sails to-morrow."

"Praise to God," exclaimed the Moor.

"We have paid the captain, here he is, two rîyâls for each one of us," proceeded Abdulla, "and we will now pay him two more. The hire is four rîyâls each."

Abdulla, Jamîl, and the black captain—his name was Husayn—sat down, and all the Moors sat up.

Abdulla then handed to the skipper, with an air of great importance, two rîyâls for each passenger—the four Moors and their woman, Jamîl, himself and me.

The Captain, saying "bismillah," took each coin, and having unsuccessfully tried to bend it, rang it sharply on the floor, or rather the roof, in front of him.

"You have four rîyâls for each—Not so?" said Abdulla.

"Yes," replied the skipper, tying up the large silver coins in his waist-cloth.

Abdulla now made the Moors a telling speech in which he disclosed to those fortunate pilgrims the great fatigues he had nobly endured in their cause. His peroration, in which he told them of the incalculable services he would yet perform for love of them—"Wallah! without reward, only for love"—was delivered with passionate sincerity. So affected were the simple souls that they impulsively wriggled forward and, one by one, taking their hands, they kissed the mutawwifs on the mouth, being met by the Mekkans with a similar salutation—a disgusting spectacle. Hâjj Ahmad, the European, turned over; mixing, as he did so, with the heavy breathing of sleep a plentiful supply of the grunt of disgust. I had observed our two youths in the market-place, kissing friends whom they had not seen for some time. Their way of doing it was not merely to "peck," but to indulge in a long-continued, noisy kind of osculation, and always on each other's mouths.

After this bout, all lay down to sleep save Abdulla, who sat for long moments pensively gazing at the stars. At last he said, very earnestly—

"O my Lord! Thou knowest best as to my woman!" and then at once lay down and went to sleep.

In that moment the good in Abdulla had come to the top. His wife and child were in Mekka.

I bought £50 of English gold in Massowa, and, in addition, I carried in my belt £150 in Egyptian bank-notes.

At last, on the 30th of May, we rose before daylight from our uncomfortable couches on the roof, performed ablutions, prayed, collected our belongings, rounded up the half dozen chickens which Jamîl had purchased, and going down into the faint greyness of the cold silent street, we made our way between the scattered hovels to the waterside.

"We have not yet drunk coffee," said Jamîl regretfully as we walked.

I smiled. Sufficient for me was the fact that I was setting out for Arabia.

"Never mind," I said. "If God wills, we will drink later."

III

MASSOWA TO EL GAHM, IN THE YEMEN

ARRIVED at the wharf, our party descended into two small boats which were plying for hire, and gliding over the silent waters in the dim light, we came alongside a large dhow which was lying at anchor among a score of others in the roadstead.

Clambering aboard, I assisted in stowing our baggage on the poop, where I found four Abyssinians already installed. These four, who were Gallas, I found to be of a very gentle yielding temper. All day they spoke among themselves in murmurs, or haltingly read passages from several tattered Arabic devotional books. Everything they did was done gently. They slept, prayed, and starved, in an undertone, as it were. For food they had divers little sacks containing lumps of rock-like durra* bread. This they gnawed painstakingly, and they drank water. Apparently they found this diet too high, as they fasted every second day. Two of them were dressed in drawers and shirts of unbleached calico, with an extra length of the same material which could be worn as a cape, a muffler, or a blanket, at will. The other two already wore the ihrâm, or pilgrim garb, which will be described later.

Our dhow was some hundred feet in length, and in beam was perhaps twenty-five feet at its broadest part. It carried two short masts which leaned sharply forward. The great boom, or yard, of the fore-mast

* Millet.

extended the whole length of the dhow, as it lay along the deck before being hoisted. The vessel was heavily laden with sacks of rice and of sugar, and the top of her gunwale was within a foot of the water. This disadvantage had been overcome by lashing pieces of rush matting to the posts along her sides. Thus fortified, the craft and her light-hearted crew were ready to cross the Red Sea.

Presently the captain came aboard. He was dressed, like his crew of nineteen slim brown youths, in nothing but a waist-cloth, which extended to his knees.

"Peace be upon you," said the captain, coming onto the poop.

"And upon you be peace and the mercy of God and His blessings," responded everybody.

"Hâmid is where?" asked the captain, eyeing his crew thoughtfully.

"Here," said a despondent voice, and looking over the side we saw a sad-faced youth, sitting in a hollowed tree-trunk boat, who had noiselessly paddled his way under the dhow's side. With him in the dug-out were two plump young goats. These were pulled aboard by the joking crew, Hâmid followed, and then the dug-out was dragged aboard.

The captain issued brisk orders, half in Arabic and half in his own African dialect. The great triangular sail was pulled out of its enormous sack and passed along the boom by the thin nimble hands of the chain of brown youths. The captain lent a hand, and soon the sail was securely tied to the yard. The crew went to the ropes, and slowly the long tapering boom rose to the creaking accompaniment of blocks and tackle.

"One, two," the captain sang, hauling on the ropes like the rest of them.

"Three, four," responded the straining crew.

"Three, four," shouted the ribald Abdulla, drowning the captain's, "one, two."

"Three, four," cried the crew with a laugh.

Thus we set out, slowly gliding past the headland. The boom was secured—its lofty point being a hundred feet above our heads. The breeze was very light, and the great sail flapped fitfully to and fro. The captain, whom the passengers addressed as Amm Husayn (Uncle Husayn), his labours over, came aft and donned a clean suit; that is to say he shed his waist-cloth, which was his only garment, and put on a newer one. Then, with grins of delight, he pulled a small bundle out of the little wooden locker on the poop. This he unrolled—displaying the Italian flag.

"That cost me ten francs," said he, "you must pay half, O Abdulla!"

"You stole it," says Abdulla, ever ready for a duel of the tongue. "And what ship is this to carry hâjjis? I will have you imprisoned when we get to the Island of the Arabs. You stole the ship from the heirs of our Lord Noah."

The gentle-mannered captain smiled indulgently.

"If we meet the Sharîf Ali's gunboat," he explained to me, "we will fly the flag of the Tolyânîs, and they will not hinder us."

All this day and the next we proceeded very slowly in the stifling heat, there being scarcely any breeze. By day, Uncle Husayn rigged up an awning over the poop. It was composed of a piece of ancient ragged sail-cloth, and the shafts of sunfire which came through its many holes seemed to burn with greater venom than did the full force of the sun without the awning.

During the night of the second day a fine fresh wind

from the north-west sent us forward at exhilarating speed, the dhow's bow rising and falling gaily as she forged her way through the choppy sea.

At daylight on the third day we found ourselves among a group of rocky and sandy islets—small and uninhabited. Two other dhows, crowded with Sudanese and other Africans, were sailing close to us. Seeing a wild-looking black figure stumbling about on one of the islets, I pointed him out to the captain. Uncle Husayn told me that he was a Sudanese who had long lived alone on that barren sun-scorched foothold in the disastrous desolation of the Red Sea. He lived on oysters, but none knew whence he procured water. His home was a rough wooden hut. Here he lived on his flat disc of yellow sand in the burning void, grilling like a steak in a frying-pan, and persistently refusing all offers of rescue.

The breeze freshened again soon after sunrise the next day, and we proceeded at a good pace until after sunset.

Abdulla spent his time between sleeping, cooking, and making senseless remarks. Jamîl did much the same, but was more silent. Their culinary creations were distinguished by simplicity. Boiled rice, with or without an admixture of lentils, was the invariable foundation. Upon this would be poured samn (melted butter), and salt and pepper would be added. Occasionally one of the unfortunate chickens, thinned for the table instead of being fattened, would be despatched with "bismillah" and a knife stroke. They were only fed about once a day when Abdulla lighted upon them in his search for the paraffin-oil can with which they were stowed away under the poop. The chicken, being boiled, was placed on top of the rice, and each

of us broke off pieces until it was gone. We usually invited Uncle Husayn to join us—the mutawwifs and myself; but when he accepted twice in succession, the ill-bred Abdulla, in spite of my reprimands, made such persistent and rude remarks about his appetite and his manner of eating, that poor Husayn after that used to wait until we had finished and then clean up the dish by himself. The two goats were killed and eaten on the first and second days of the voyage, and supplied feasts for everyone aboard. For the rest our food consisted of fried eggs for breakfast, followed by a Turkish preparation of sugar known to the Arabs under the generic name "halâwa," which is applied to all sweetstuff or sweet pastry. This was eaten with bread, which the heat of the atmosphere had baked into bricks. We drank tea with no milk and much sugar, and occasionally Uncle Husayn discovered a little money-bag which contained a small but apparently priceless hoard of coffee berries. One or two of these having been crushed and cast into hot water, Uncle Husayn would presently pour us out a few drops each of his treasured beverage, his hand ashake with the excitement of seeing the nectar flow, or with the fear that a drop might be spilt.

All day long the Abyssinians talked murmuringly among themselves, or read the Korân in an undertone. One of their number, called Shaykh Idrîs, was a man of some learning. He spoke classical Arabic well, although he had never lived among Arabs. He told me that he had taught himself from books during twenty-five years of study. He had cut himself off from marriage and from all worldly pleasure, and devoted his life solely to the pursuit of religious knowledge.

The Moorish woman lay behind a screen of white

calico which her husband had so rigged up that it formed a small square chamber. When the dhow pitched she could be heard within her bower, groaning plaintively. At other times she would render a long religious chant in a tone expressing a mixture of despair and whooping cough. So distressing was her performance that, as she chanted, I found myself looking towards the bow of the vessel, eagerly wishing for the appearance of a wave which would make the dhow pitch sufficiently to shake the lady out of her chant. I found her groaning much more musical.

One of the Moors occasionally chanted the Korân, but his pronunciation was so bad that one could scarcely understand a single word of it. Abdulla and Jamîl sat together convulsed with half-suppressed laughter, and making ribald criticisms of the chanter.

"O Hâjj Ahmad!" whispered Jamîl to me, spluttering with mirth. "Hear the singer! Is he not fine? Wallah! All my life I have not heard such a one as he."

"What casîda (chant) does he sing?" I asked the first time, being ignorant that it was from the Korân.

This made our two youths explode with laughter.

The Moor, his name was Hâjj Mowlûd, continued to bellow and bray. Poor soul, he meant well, but he ought to have had a dhow to himself. When he was silent, the grinning Abdulla would sometimes shout in his brazen voice, while only partially restraining his glee:

"O Hâjj Mowlûd! How is your state? Will you not give us somewhat from the Korân?"

The flattered Moor, with grave looks to the horizon and the mast-head, would rise from his recumbent position on the rice sacks, and seating himself decorously, commence to bray and howl.

The other Moors were quiet, inarticulate creatures, but well able to take care of themselves, as all the Moors are. The merchant was illiterate, but nevertheless he had long religious chants of some dervish order in his head. One day he let some of these out during three hours of subdued warbling. His performance was more supportable than that of his wife and his companion, but I did not regret that he did it only once.

The speech of the Moors is much debased from the Arabic of Arabia, and the use which they make of accentuation is peculiar. Even our Mekkans, with their experience of all the races who go to Mekka in the Hajj, frequently failed to understand what the Moors said.

The crew were cheerful souls. Their life was a hard comfortless one. After the two goats had been killed, they lived on nothing but stone-like masses of durra bread for nearly a week. They drank only water, which was carried in a great iron drum amidships. At night they threw themselves down on the bare deck to sleep, or on top of the cargo, with only a piece of old sacking for covering.

At sunset the captain would open his little wooden locker with a key, and taking out a cheap and ancient watch, would wind it up—setting it to twelve o'clock Arabic time. He would also take out a small battered pocket-compass, and moving it round a little, would say, "Look, Hâjj Ahmad! that is the north, and here the south," or some such remark, with a knowing air.

"Then where is the Kibla?" I asked him once.

Uncle Husayn took a quick look at the wakening stars, disregarding the compass.

"There is the Kibla," he replied without hesitation, pointing across the port bow.

He slept a little during the daytime, but at night he did not sleep at all. He would sit on the poop with the rudder-arm under his own arm, and at long intervals would chant a supplication to God for a good breeze. Occasionally he sang softly in his African language, and his voice was not unmusical. One day he borrowed my nail-scissors for the purpose of cutting his hair. Each little astrakan curl was held between the finger and thumb of his left hand, while his right manipulated the scissors. When he had finished, his head presented the appearance of a muddy football which had been rolled in coal-dust.

One day Abdulla was disputing, as was his wont, with Uncle Husayn, and being worsted in the argument he said: "Why do you contradict me, O black one? You are of the slave race. I will take you up to Mekka and sell you in the slave market."

Husayn did not cease to smile easily at this insult, only his eyes became brighter.

"No!" he said. "I am of the Dankal race. There are no slaves among us. Wallah! we get the slaves for the slave markets of Arabia. We are no slaves! Never! Never!"

It sounded uncommonly like the refrain of "Rule Britannia!" but I think my involuntary smile was taken by Uncle Husayn as one of encouragement to himself.

I was interested in his naive confession, and later on I asked Husayn about the slave traffic. He told me that the captains of dhows occasionally buy a slave or two on the African coast and take them across, as members of the crew, to Arabia, where they sell them again.

"But," he concluded, "it is not done much now for fear of the warships of Europe."

Others are brought across the Red Sea as servants or companions to the merchants, their owners.

On the afternoon of our fifth day out from Massowa the wind increased to considerable violence, and the sea rose. Presently the waves, beating against the rush matting of the dhow's side, stove it in at one point. Uncle Husayn called brisk words of command, and the crew began to bale water out of the space which had been left amidships between the cargo and the raised poop. All the while the wind was increasing in violence, and the overloaded dhow, rolling in the heavy seas, was constantly shipping water over her sides which, as already mentioned, extended, leaving out of account the frail rush matting, only a foot above the water-line. Some of the crew were still mending the broken matting, when suddenly without any warning, the long yard of the after mast broke in two and came crashing down upon us. Fortunately, it slithered over the side without striking anybody, dragging its sail with it. It also broke and took with it a wooden stanchion to which was secured a small canvas bag belonging to me. I had that morning taken this little sack out of my saddle-bag, and had secured it for the time being to the stanchion. I never saw it again. It contained my English passport and an Oriental passport, and also a small compass and an aneroid. Thus it was that I completed my travels without any passport whatsoever. My camera was saved because I happened to have it in the pocket of my thawb. I was carrying it with me because I wanted to secure a photograph of Uncle Husayn, but in this I was unsuccessful.

Uncle Husayn and some of his crew quickly cut the ropes of the fallen tackle, but nothing was abandoned. The sail was slowly drawn inboard, and also the two pieces of the broken spar.

The Abyssinian, Shaykh Idrîs, and also the Moorish woman, were made very sick by the rolling and pitching of the dhow. The only cure they attempted was complete starvation and punctuality at prayers.

Towards evening on this, the fifth day of our voyage, in the middle of the hubbub of creaking tackle and yelling voices, of discomfort and dirt, I looked back over the stern of the dhow, and there in the distance I saw a great ocean steamer racing down to Aden. For a moment I thought with longing of the cool placidity of her spotless decks; and with even more longing of those wonderful little ivory buttons on the bulkheads, which have only to be pressed with the finger to ensure the presence of an obliging Aladdin who will bring you the most delicious of iced drinks. But only for a moment I may truly say, for in the next I had turned again to search with eager gaze the eastward haze behind which lay Arabia.

Thus the days passed slowly away until, on the afternoon of our eighth day out from Massowa, as we lay upon the deck in somnolent languor under the blazing sun, Uncle Husayn suddenly stiffened as he sat at the rudder, and looking keenly ahead, said "There is land!"

Instantly everybody on the poop sat up and looked with straining eyes in the direction he indicated. Looking fixedly ahead, I could just make out the faint outline of a group of mountain peaks. Nearer was a small rock island which rose, grim and black, sheer out of the water to a height of perhaps seven hundred feet.

It is called Catanbal. As we drew nearer to the coast the rugged peaks of rock became ever clearer. Like great jagged teeth they were, but black and strangely grim. Arabia! There it lay, across the sparkling expanse of blue waters. The country which, surrounded by great civilisations with their splendour and wealth, has itself remained an unknown wilderness. A country whose actual inhabitants number no more than five million souls, but which is looked upon as their spiritual homeland on earth by three hundred millions of the human race.

The hâjjis were all sitting up now.

"Praise to God," they fervently cried.

"O God! Thou art the Merciful. Thou Lord of the worlds."

"God is Greatest. There is no God but The God alone."

"There is no Succourer but Thee! Thou Most Merciful of those who show mercy."

Some of them even cried "Labbayk, Allahumma, Labbayk" ("Here am I, O God! At Thy command").

The terrors of the sea were forgotten. The burning sun no longer oppressed them. The Moorish woman insisted that her white screen should be raised, and sat, with uncovered face and emotional eyes, tremulously praising God.

"Is there a town on the coast here?" I asked the captain.

"Yes," he replied. "Birk is above us, and this is El Gahm."

"Then we are far from El Lîth," I said.

"We will pass by here and go up the coast to El Lîth," he replied. "But if you like to land here and hire camels you can go up by land to Mekka."

I recommended to Jamîl and Abdulla that we should do this, and the matter was agreed upon and cancelled, and again agreed upon, some half a dozen times during the afternoon. The Moorish merchant, who at Massowa had proved difficult to induce to travel in the dhow, did not now want to leave it. Abdulla and Jamîl did not want to lose the Moors, or, more correctly, the Moors' money. Thus, whenever the Moors wavered, Abdulla and Jamîl found themselves on shifting ground and were obliged to jump with them.

Towards sunset the dhow sailed over a reef of white rock some twenty miles from the coast. The water was very clear and, looking over the stern, I saw that we were followed by an escort of three large sharks, which glided over the white reef beneath us like gigantic carp in a marble tank. Sometimes they turned on their sides to look up at the dhow, and then the under-hung lines of their grim mouths were visible, and the whiteness of their bellies. Inside the reef, which is very narrow, the water is again deep.

The wind now increased and blew so strongly from the north that Uncle Husayn decided to run into the cove of El Gahm and anchor for the night. It was after sunset when we found ourselves beneath a towering conical mountain of black rock which forms the headland on the northen side of the little bay. Within this bay dhows anchor at about a mile from the shore. The water is apparently very shallow all over the bay, but small steamers could anchor within two miles of the shore and still be within the shelter of the headlands. Uncle Husayn told me that the only safe approach is well to the southward of the northern headland. He sailed his dhow in at a point some ten miles south of

that landmark. A small whitened mosque, standing amid dark groves of palm trees, on the curving shore to the south-eastward of the mountain, was faintly visible in the falling dusk.

As soon as the anchor had been thrown overboard and its rope secured, one of the dug-outs was pushed over the side for Shaykh Idrîs to go ashore and recuperate. He was accompanied by two others of the Abyssinians. They had not paddled more than a quarter of a mile in the moonlight, when the boat bumped on the shallow bed of the bay. They got out and waded to dry land. They had intended to spend the night ashore, but being unable to find any wood for making a fire, and repelled by the rock-strewn inhospitable nature of the ground, and by the cries of jackals, they returned after a little while, and clambering aboard, re-settled themselves on the poop with signs of relief and appreciation.

Night advancing, we despatched the evening meal and performed the 'eshâ prayer, and then lay down to sleep. The dhow lay motionless. Here, beneath the sheltering black mountain, the wind moved gently on its southward way. The great white moon of the fourteenth night (of Du-l Giada) hung, calm and motionless, above the mast-heads, among the stars, transforming the blue-blackness of the silent world to ghostly clearness.

IV

EL GAHM

LONG before sunrise the next day (7th June) we were aroused by the sounds of the crew heaving up the anchor and raising the sail. Having performed our ablutions, dipping sea-water from over the dhow's side for the purpose, as our custom was, in order to spare the fresh water, we prayed the dawn prayer and then breakfasted.

Uncle Husayn now endeavoured to sail the dhow out of the bay. Three times he circled towards the open sea, but each time he found the wind from the north-west too strong to beat up against. Finally he brought the vessel back to her original anchorage, and dropped anchor.

All the morning the debate was carried on between Abdulla, Jamîl, and the Moors, as to whether we should remain aboard or pursue our journey by land. At last, when the Moors had consented for perhaps the tenth time to go by land, I said to Uncle Husayn "It is finished then. Launch the boats O Uncle Husayn! and let some of the youths help us with the baggage."

"Good," said the captain.

"It is not your business, O Hâjj Ahmad," said Abdulla. "These Moors must not be deserted. It is not possible for them to reach Mekka alone. Do they know the way?"

"They are coming with us," I replied. "Not so, O Hâjj Muhammad?"

"We will go, if it please God," said the Moor, rising.

One of the boats was now floating alongside, and I dragged my saddle-bags to the waist of the dhow, where they were received by one of the sailors, who deposited them in the boat. Jamîl and Abdulla put their boxes into the boat, together with some of the Moors' belongings. Finally Jamîl and one of the sailors descended into the loaded boat and paddled towards the shore. Two more boats were then launched, and making several journeys between the dhow and the shore, eventually put us all on dry land. There were twelve of us in all—the four Moors, and their woman, four Abyssinians, the two Mekkans, and myself.

The village of El Gahm stands on a low, sandy plain which extends from the foot of the mountains of 'Asîr to the sea-shore. At this point the breadth of the plain, from the sea to the first of the foothills, is no more than two miles. Proceeding northward, the mountains gradually recede from the sea-shore, until, culminating in the heights of Jebel Kura between Mekka and Et-Tâif, they leave the broad plain of the western Tîhâma between themselves and the sea. El Gahm, with the exception of its stone mosque, is entirely built of thatch huts, called in the singular 'usha (plural 'ushash). Most of these huts were of circular beehive shape, but some few were square. A narrow plantation of date palms extended behind the village; and as far southward as one could see, scanty groups of these trees were growing along the sea-shore.

As the boat grounded in the shallows, I got out and waded a hundred yards or more to the shelving beach. Here, within a square hut which was open on three of its sides, Jamîl was sitting with one of the natives

of the place. I entered, and saluting them with peace, seated myself on a bench or bedstead (here called kursî, sometimes sirîr) made of a wooden frame strung with plaited fibre cord. A few moments later Abdulla and the Moors entered, accompanied by several of the Gahm Arabs. The latter were little, thin, starved-looking men with great eyes and prominent noses. The colour of their skins was a very dark copper-brown, and their hair, which reached nearly to the shoulders, stood out in a fuzzy mass around the head, like a wig. Their thin faces, cunning restless eyes, and long matted hair, gave them the appearance of perfect elves. They wore nothing but a dirty thawb or smock, which reached a little below the knees. This was in some cases of a dirty white, but more generally it had been roughly dyed to a crude brown colour. Over this smock a belt was worn—either a single strip of leather, or several thin strips plaited together, or merely a piece of ancient calico become rope-like with use. Stuck into the belts of most of them was a short curved sword worn in a horizontal position. Some of them also had spears between six and seven feet in length. Their speech was singularly free from foreign words and expressions, and was, in point of purity of pronunciation and grammatical correctness, superior to that of the Bedouins of the tribe of Curaysh, who, working in the pilgrim traffic on the Jidda road, make use of many foreign words and expressions in their ordinary speech.

Presently one of the Bedouins, a sturdy youth named Zayd, brought us coffee. The Yemen manner of making coffee is to add a great deal of ground ginger (zanjabîl) to the brew. The taste of coffee is only faintly apparent, but the mixture makes a sufficiently pleasant drink. It

is boiled in a long-necked clay bottle, and drunk out of large clay finjâns, which almost exactly resemble the tapping-cups which are used in the East Indies to collect latex from the india-rubber tree.

The coffee-drinking coming to an end, Abdulla and Jamîl began to treat with the Bedouins for camels to carry us to El Lîth. The Arabs, however, would not consent to take us beyond Birk, where we should be obliged to hire other camels in order to proceed on our way. Birk is little more than half a day's journey north of El Gahm. Presently Abdulla and Jamîl took the camel-owners outside, in order to complete the bargaining in private without being overheard by the Moors. Returning after a few minutes, they told us that they had arranged for us to start at daylight next morning for Birk.

It was now well past midday, and we proceeded to prepare food and to make ourselves as comfortable as possible on the sandy beach for the coming night. Uncle Husayn had come ashore with two of his crew, and it was pleasant to hear still his calm human speech occasionally dominating the boisterous inanity of Abdulla. As night fell, each, having eaten and prayed, wrapped himself in his blanket or cloak, and with nothing else between himself and the stars, went to sleep.

At dawn the next morning the Arabs brought a string of mangy camels into the village, and their ruckling and groaning awoke us from slumber. Prayers and coffee were hastily despatched, and then everybody prepared his baggage for loading on the camels. Uncle Husayn came to take leave of us, and then he and his two companions got into their dug-out and paddled away to the dhow.

The camels were loaded and we were all ready to

mount when Abdulla, who had been furtively conferring with Jamîl, came towards me.

"Ahmad Effendi!" he said. "We did not understand the cost of carrying you to Mekka. We find you have not given us enough money. We want you to give us another two guineas."

I knew that this was merely an invention of the mutawwifs, and I also knew that if I did not nip their game in the bud, there would probably be no end to their demands in the future.

"Good." I replied to Abdulla. "But you cannot know, until we reach Mekka, what it will cost us. When we arrive there it will be time to discuss that matter. We will speak of it in Mekka, in shâ Allah."

"In any case, we want two guineas now, at once," he said, "as our money is finished."

The Bedouins and Moors stood watching us in motionless interest.

"The arrangement is that I give you more money at El Lîth," I said, "so it is upon you to wait until we get there."

At this the light-witted creature became enraged.

"He will not give!" he shouted. "If he does not give I will take it from him by force—the dog!"

Saying this, he pushed my shoulder slightly with his hand. Instantly every muscle in my body braced hard. There is something quite insupportable to an Englishman in the touch of hostile hands. Abdulla must have seen in my eyes a gleam of the anger which flooded every part of me, though I spoke only the one word "Hâsib!"—Take care!—for he fell back a pace or two looking at me, and then looking away again in a somewhat confused manner. Then, in a moment, he had recovered his brazen self-assertiveness.

"I will take it by force from the dog," he shrieked, "it is my hope to take his life. The dog! the Jew! the Nasrâni!"

On the sound of the last dire word I felt every sharp pair of Bedouin eyes among them turn instantly upon me, as though actuated by a single mechanism; to scrutinise me intently for a moment and then continue their shifting observation of the scene in general. Their heads scarcely turned—only the eyes.

I unostentatiously raised my right hand to the pocket of my thawb, and thrusting it inside, I felt with my thumb the friendly hardness of a little revolver which I carried concealed at my waist, but I did not speak. I am afraid that had Abdulla dared definitely to strike me, I would have smashed his arm with leaden bullets.

The best way to nullify the grievances of these light-headed creatures, if overbearing force is ruled out, is to talk as loudly and as fast as themselves and let them think you are taking an interest in it, and perhaps to end up with a laugh and a half-promise. Members of a community which knows nothing of reserve, they cannot understand that quietness and calm impassivity may conceal strong purpose. At this moment, however, I could not have gone against my feelings and stooped to argue with the wretch to save my life. I had been so long cooped up with him in the dhow that I was quite weary of his ceaseless idiocy.

The word "dog" was nothing. These Bedouins could not but know that the lower classes of Mekkans "dog" and "pig" each other all day long. The word "Jew" also would not make much impression on their imagination. There are in El Yemen thousands of Jews, particularly in the capital, Sanaa, and in the south.

The "accusation" of Nasrâni—Christian—was quite another matter. The Christian is more hated throughout the Islamic world at the present time than is Iblîs himself. The reason for this is doubtless that the world is, in the present age, almost entirely ruled by Christian powers—to the exclusion of the Muslimîn. Yet in the Korân, chapter *The Table*, it is written:

> "Verily [O Muhammad!] thou wilt find the nearest among them [i.e. among mankind] in friendliness to the believers to be those who say 'Verily we are Christians.' "

If, therefore, the Muslimîn paid more attention to their sacred book, they should harbour a greater liking for the followers of the Christian form of religion than for the followers of any other save their own.

I do not suppose that Abdulla's calling me Nasrâni carried any conviction among his hearers, but such an "accusation" was bound to startle them at the moment of its utterance. There is only one person in a better position to arouse the fanatical hate of Muhammadans than a Christian in the way to Mekka, and that is a Christian who has already arrived in that forbidden city. But these had seen me pray, and the lightness of my skin was nothing to them. The complexion of Muhammad, the Moorish merchant, was, as it happened, considerably fairer than my own. The Bedouins probably thought I was a Turk, with which race the people of El Yemen had become quite familiar during several centuries preceding the Great War.

"Will you give the two guineas, O dog!" said again this "Neighbour of God," as the Mekkans are proud to call themselves.

The Moors and Bedouins continued to regard us silently. The Moorish woman looked on fixedly, with the light of that strange lust beginning to appear in her eyes which I believe most women of Arab race feel when they watch a fight between men.

A brief glance over my shoulder was sufficient to inform me that Uncle Husayn, with his sail full, was three miles off shore. In the event of a fight there was no escape in that direction. Most settled Arabs, and even many of the Bedouins, can be fairly counted on to throw in their lot with the stronger side—regardless of right or of the claims of hospitality—especially if that course strikes them as leading lootward. The Abyssinians were too gentle and weak to do much—even for one of their own race. I was alone—but I had five rounds of ammunition in my revolver and another twenty in a cartridge-belt.

During these happenings I did not lose sight of my objective. My objective was Mekka; other matters were of no great importance. I saw, however, that the time had come for me to part company with the two mutawwifs; that was imperative.

I turned to the nearest of the Bedouins.

"Tell me," I said, "where is the house of the shaykh of the village, O my brother?"

"That is his house—there," he replied, pointing up the irregular row of thatch huts.

"We will go and speak to him," I said, moving forward a few paces. But the Bedouins demurred.

"It is a shame to do that," they said, "let the difference be settled among us."

"Good!" I replied, "who is the chief among you?"

One of them—a grey-bearded shaykh—commenced to question Jamîl about the arrangement made be-

tween us. I walked away a few paces and sat down on a kursî, in order to let them argue the matter out. Presently the Bedouin shaykh came towards me.

"There is nothing against you, O my son!" he said: "but give him the two guineas and let him tighten (i.e. tighten the saddle ropes and travel). That is the best, and look upon the matter as an alms."

This, however, I refused to do, and he returned to the mutawwifs.

Presently, coming again, he sat down beside me.

"Give them a guinea, O my father!" he said. "Only one. Billah! give them a guinea. It is possible that we go to the shaykh of the village, but it is better to mend the matter with amity between you."

With the necessary show of reluctance, I extracted a sovereign from my belt and handed it to him.

"Take! O my father!" I said, "God make it easy for them."

He grinned.

"God requite you good," he said as he went away.

As soon as this transaction was completed, the two Mekkans, together with the Moors and their woman and the Abyssinians, all prepared themselves to mount. Just as they were ready Jamîl came towards me.

"Why not come with us, Hâjj Ahmad?" he said. "Do not pay any attention to Abdulla. He is mad, Wallah! I say mad. When we reach Mekka I will spread your carpet in the best room of my house, and you can sleep on the roof and do what you like. Our house is your house. By God! I love you, Hâjj Ahmad."

"I am sated with Abdulla," I replied. "From now on I will travel alone, in shâ Allah."

"Be it as you wish," he replied. "But give me the written paper which we signed, and I will return you yours."

It might be they feared that I should accuse them before the Câdî (judge) at Mekka, and produce the written contract as evidence.

I refused to surrender the paper, and was glad I had done so when I observed that Jamîl's manner became still more ingratiating as a result of my refusal.

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said he, finally, "I tell you one thing. Do not leave this village without a water-skin of your own. Do not rely on the Bedu to supply you with water in the way."

They were now all ready to move off. Shaykh Idrîs, with the other Abyssinians, came across to take leave of me; and with them came one of the Moors for whom I had performed an insignificant service on the dhow.

"Come with us, Hâjj Ahmad," urged Shaykh Idrîs, "these youths (his companions) will serve you in the way."

"God bless you and them," I replied, "but I will rest here till to-morrow, and if it please God, I will see you again in the Haram of Mekka."

"If it please God," they said.

They each took my hand, in turn, the poor Abyssinian youths attempting to kiss it, and turned away to mount their camels.

The mutawwifs had, for their own greater profit, hired only sufficient camels for carrying two riders on each. Consequently the unfortunate hâjjis were obliged to sit in cramped positions which they could not easily change from time to time.

The string of ill-conditioned beasts moved slowly through the straggling huts and sparse clumps of date palms, out into the glaring sun-scorched coastal plain —northwards.

V

EL GAHM TO BIRK

I SPENT that day in the hut by the sea-shore, Zayd bringing me food. Occasionally some of the villagers would come in to salute me and enquire about my plans. From these I learnt that I was already in a country at war. El Gahm is within the borders of the Amîrate of 'Asîr, which is ruled by the Sayyid El Idrîsi. The powerful Imâm Yahya, ruler of the Yemen was at that time engaged in the kingly occupation—the desire for which seems to be universal—of extending his territories. It was easy for him to prove that the province of 'Asîr had once been ruled by the Imâms of Sanaa, and that being so, it was plainly his property. Accordingly the Imâm Yahya, as I now heard, would proceed to occupy the ground on which I stood so soon as a temporary truce which had been agreed upon between himself and the Idrîsi had expired.

Nobody in El Gahm appeared to suffer any travail of spirit over this depressing prospect. In fact some of the local youths had gone over to the Yemen side in order to enlist in the ranks of the invaders of their country. Others, being simpler souls, or perhaps having less knowledge of the political stock-exchange, had joined the motley band whose object it was to do or die in defence of 'Asîr and the Idrîsi Amîr. Apparently, however, the great majority of the inhabitants of the state had wisely decided to continue their proper avocations as though nothing untoward had happened or was likely to happen.

Now and then a woman would come towards the hut, and standing a pace or two without, would look in upon us and listen to the conversation. Thin, starved under-sized, dirty, with great dark eyes filled only with a dreary cunning—I have never seen less attractive members of their sex. They were dressed like the men, in nothing but a filthy thawb or smock, dyed, in their case, with indigo. Their tousled hair was plaited in two ragged tails. They were as completely devoid of judgment as they were of charm—their faces were quite unveiled.

At the hours of prayer I repaired with Zayd to the mosque, and our way lay through the sûk. The latter consisted of three or four open huts, and contained nothing but dates, Yemen tobacco, green coffee berries and dukhn (a wheat-like grain, but very minute—resembling canary seed).

I slept the night on a kursî within the hut, in order to escape the bloodthirsty onslaught of the camel-ticks with which the sand was infested.

The next morning soon after sunrise, Zayd, coming from the market-place, told me that he had bespoken a camel to carry me to Birk.

Soon afterwards two Arabs appeared, leading a string of five camels loaded with sacks of dukhn. These halted at a little distance from the hut.

"O hâjji. Mount!" called one of the Arabs. "Where is Zayd?"

Zayd, hearing his name, came out of his hut, and lifting my saddle-bags he carried them to the camels. The bags having been thrown over the saddle of one of the animals, I shook Zayd by the hand and mounted. The next moment the camels were shuffling slowly through the dust of the palm groves. In a few minutes

more we left these behind, and came out on a plain of yellow sand hardened by water which had evaporated, leaving a crystalline residue of salt. This plain became gradually wider as we advanced, until, at four hours' distance from El Gahm, the distance between the sea-shore and the foot-hills was some five miles. Here we halted at a place called Duhbân, where we found a small stream of water flowing in the wâdi.

The Arabs halted here only long enough for us to drink from the stream, and then continued to press forward. Seated aloft on my camel I made a meal of dates and bread, handing some also to my companions who walked beside their animals.

After passing Duhbân, the ground surface changes from smooth sand to a slightly undulating plain thickly strewn with black rocks and pebbles of all shapes and sizes. This continues to the village of Birk, where our journey ended.

Birk stands on a rising ground at the midway point of the arc described by a little bay. The village is built of rush huts, with the exception of the house of the governor (at that time one Ali ibn Abdu), together with some store-houses and the mosque, which are constructed of stone.

The camels paced slowly up a steep little path bordered by low walls of stones—piled up or thrown together rather than built. These walls enclosed several small squares of ground, though why it was enclosed was not apparent. Inside the walls, as without, the only yield of the earth was stones. At the bottom of the eminence on which the village stood were four or five lonely-looking date palms, standing in the blazing sunlight at a stone's throw from the sea. So clear was

the dry hot air, and so exhausting to breathe, that we might have been within the lifeless confines of a vast vacuum. The blinding sunlight drew from the camel-grass, the scrub, and the rocks of the further hillsides, delicate shades of pink, of purple, and of green, which no rocks or plants ever possessed in a lesser radiance of light. The air about us seemed itself to emit refulgent light, as though the fiery sun had heated it to a state of incandescence.

"You are alighting where, O hâjji?" asked one of the camel-drivers. He and his companion had both betrayed signs of uneasiness ever since we came in sight of the village. It was evident now that they were anxious to drop their loads and return.

"I will alight at the mosque," I replied.

"Good," he rejoined shortly.

As we threaded our way between the rush huts, we passed a portly man of middle age ambling down the narrow path.

"Es-salâm 'alaykum," he said.

We returned his salutation, and then he turned to walk beside one of my companions who was walking in the rear of the train of camels.

"Who is this?" I heard him ask.

"This one is a hâjji," replied the camel-driver.

"He alights where?" asked the other.

"His intention is the mosque—thus he says," he replied.

"Let him alight with me," he said, and coming alongside the camel on which I rode, he greeted me with "Welcome, O hâjji! How is thy state? Come and alight with us! Our house is near."

"Good," I replied. "I will alight with you."

In a few moments more we reached a rush fence,

inclosing an irregular oval of ground some twenty yards long. Within this compound stood two huts.

At the invitation of the fat man, whose name was Muhammad, I dismounted and passed through the gateway of his dwelling. He himself took my saddle-bags from the camel-driver and bore them in after me. With a brief farewell to us, the Arabs urged their camels forward again and disappeared round a bend of the dusty track on their way to the market-place, where they would unload their grain.

"Welcome, O hâjji!" said Muhammad, leading the way into the first of the two huts.

Following him in, I found myself in a circular room, measuring between fifteen and twenty feet in diameter, the roof of which was dome-shaped. This hut was constructed of three sorts of material. The first was a strong framework of stout poles—being the branches and stems of small trees. Over this was a close trellis-work of the sticks of palm-fronds. This was all secured or laced together by cords of twisted fibre, and over it was laid, and secured by cords, a thick thatch of rushes. These rushes are similar to the stalks of the durra plant, and are cultivated for this purpose on the Tihâma or seaboard plain of Western Arabia—particularly about El Gunfuda, and to the southward.

Within the hut were three kursîs, and two enormous wooden chests bound with bands of iron and studded with brass nails. Pegs or sticks of wood were stuck into the walls on every side, and upon these hung articles of clothing, among which were three tarbûshes made of plaited stalks. Also hanging to the walls were a number of little baskets containing various utensils, such as old knives, coffee finjâns, clay coffee-pots and the like. Over the wooden chests hung an ancient

curved sword and a matchlock gun. There were two doorways to the hut, and on a flat stone near one of them stood two porous clay water-bottles called shirba (pl. shirab). The floor was of beaten earth.

As we entered, a thin pale-faced young woman rose from one of the kursîs, and giving me one dark sad look, glided bare-footed and shrouded out of the opposite doorway, like the incarnation of a half-revealed secret.

"Welcome!" said the hospitable Muhammad again. "Sit! We will make you coffee. Drink first of cold water."

I took the water-bottle from his hand, and saying "bismillah," was about to drink deeply of the cool water when he said "Wait! which water would you like? Taste of this and of this."

Saying so, he indicated the shirba in my hand, and also the other which remained on the stone. Then, taking a small wooden bowl from a peg, he poured a little water into it. I tasted and found it was brackish and alkaline.

"This," I said, "is saltish."

"Wait! I will give you other," he said, and having drunk the residue of the water from the bowl, he poured out a little from the second shirba and handed it to me. This was quite sweet.

"This," I said, "is much better. I will drink of this."

He smiled with the lazy appreciation of a connoisseur of rare vintages, and poured out the water for me to drink.

"This is from a spring," he said, " and that is from a well behind the house. This costs us a piastre for two girbas, and that costs only half a piastre!"

Presently, as we sat talking of the Wahhâbî invasion

of the Hijâz, an old woman came to the door of the hut and placed a coffee vessel on the floor within. Muhammad rose, and arranged eight finjâns on a little wooden stool. He then filled them all with the contents of the coffee-pot—it was the same hot brew of ginger flavoured with coffee which I had drunk at El Gahm. Handing me a finjân, he took one himself, and having emptied these, we each took another of the full ones, and so on, till all the finjâns were empty.

It was now approaching sunset, and having performed our ablutions in the compound, we made our way to the mosque. This was a small walled square, without any roof or minaret. It was like a square courtyard, and was floored with slabs of stone. In one corner was a roughly-constructed stone tank containing water for wudhû (ceremonial ablution). In the northern wall was the mihrâb—the niche which indicates the direction of the Kibla.

Muhammad was the regular muaddin of the village, and accordingly, upon arrival at the mosque he mounted to the top of four or five stone steps in one corner of the building, and chanted the adân—the call to prayer. Among the ill-kempt throng who now came in at the little doorway, I noticed a tall fair man, wearing a white linen jacket over his thawb of the same material. He had yellow hair and moustache, and was the cleanest-looking person I had seen since landing in Arabia. He wore a Mekkan turban, and I guessed that he was from that city. Upon the conclusion of prayers, as I sat on the flagged floor talking to Muhammad, this man came up, and saluting us with peace, sat down with us. I learnt that he was a Serb, and that his father was settled in Mekka. He was known as Umar Effendi, and he held the position of Customs Officer

for the Port of Birk. He invited me to join him for the evening meal; but to this my host, Muhammad, strongly objected. After much friendly quarrelling between them, however, it was agreed that as I was to sleep at the house of Muhammad and also to breakfast there in the morning, it was only equitable that Umar should have my company for that evening.

The people of Birk are, in fact, extremely agreeable and hospitable, and they have this reputation in Mekka and elsewhere. A small trader of Mekka, who had travelled far in the desolate marches of Arabia to buy and sell, once said to me: "Wallah! No people delight me as do the people of Birk." They are much more handsome than the Arabs whom I had seen further south, and their manners and speech are more refined than those of any other Arab community which I have encountered. The women were unveiled, though most of them occasionally made a feint of covering their faces in the presence of men, and some of them were of distinctly pleasing appearance. They were dressed in long dark-blue gowns which nearly covered their feet, and about their shoulders was a large piece of black cloth, somewhat resembling the malaya or habara of Egypt, but less voluminous. It was sometimes worn so as to cover the head, but was more generally allowed to fall to the shoulders. All went bare-footed.

In Umar's house I found another guest—one Hilmi, a Turk, who had once been a sergeant in the Turkish army stationed in the Yemen. For some reason which I did not learn, he had deserted, and for several years had been engaged in the lean business of buying and selling, or bartering, among the Bedouins. I asked him why he did not go back to Turkey, and he replied that he feared to do that lest he should be caught and shot

as a deserter. He had heard, however, that the Republican Government of Mustapha Kemâl was about to pass an act of amnesty in favour of all who had committed treason against the House of Othmân. When this was confirmed, he said, he should waste no more of his life "among the dogs of Arabia." He was a man of some thirty or thirty-five years, and was thin and unjovial. He was, however, a very accomplished cook, and he it was who prepared our dinner. I had not eaten cooked food for twenty-four hours, and was consequently in a condition to appreciate the result of his efforts. I can safely say that, so far as I know, nobody since the dawn of history has ever cooked boiled rice-and-samn so perfectly as Sergeant Hilmi, or boiled a leg of goat with such consummate skill as he did that night. I found little time for making observations while the meal was in progress, but I did notice that several large dog-like cats prowled incessantly in the dimness near the walls, and occasionally ran padding across the earthen floor with their head held low like hounds. These cats were practically hairless, perhaps as the result of cutaneous disease. They were big-boned and massive, and went their ways hither and thither in sinister silence.

After the banquet, we carried a couple of kursîs from Umar's hut, and placed them on a little raised space in the open air without. Sitting here, we could dimly see the inky sea on the one hand, and on the other the dark outline of the hills with the moon's bright disc hanging low above them among the glittering stars. Soon we were joined by another party who brought out their bedsteads from the next hut. These were arranged next to our own so as to form a square. The newcomers were an old shaykly man of Birk and

his guests—three merchants from Mekka. One of these, a tall lithe man named Ahmad, was a native of the sacred city. The other two were Indians who had settled there—one a little quiet clerkly man of poor appearance but in reality very wealthy; the other, his clerk and general assistant, a heavily bearded man of middle height, with a secretive air.

Umar, coming again from his house, placed in the centre of the gathering a wooden stool, on which rested a large tin dish loaded with cut water-melon. This having been eaten, Umar and the Turk Hilmi brought out coffee-pots and finjâns. The merchant, Ahmad, damped with water a handful of tobacco for his shîsha, which had been placed on the ground before him. The shîsha or water-pipe is a troublesome luxury to prepare. First of all, water in correct quantity must be poured into the vase, which, in Arabia, is usually a coconut shell, ornamented with brass and silver. The snake-like tube, with its decorated mouth-piece, is next attached to a short brass pipe in the vase. The smoker carries his tobacco in a little pouch of leather or coloured silk. Their tobacco is commonly purchased in the leaf, like dried stalks of sage. Having taken out the correct quantity, and broken it up small, he pours water upon it as he holds it in his hand. Then, having squeezed the surplus water out of it again, he presses it into the red clay bowl, which is then fitted on the top of the pipe's long upright stem. Everything is now ready for the fire to be applied, but in Arabia this too takes time. Glowing charcoal is the means of ignition, and this usually requires some minutes of time, and much exertion of fanning or blowing, to prepare. When at last the charcoal glows to his satisfaction, the smoker takes a piece or two if it with a small pair of iron tongs,

and places it on top of the damp tobacco. Now, at last, he begins to smoke; and nobody, observing the shîsha smoker at this moment, would doubt that the trouble taken was worth the end attained. To see Ahmad sink back on his kursî with the foot-long mouth-piece in his hand, to hear his sighs of contentment, his exclamations of pious thankfulness to God, as he drew the first whiffs, was to understand the meaning of the word "kayf."

"El hamdu Lillah," sighed Ahmad, between the whiffs.

"El hamdu Lillah," echoed the sitters on the kursîs. Some of them were engaged in rolling cigarettes of a dry powdery shag. Umar's neighbour was preparing his own shîsha. Umar himself rolled a cigarette and handed it to me, together with a finjân of coffee. Some villagers, climbing the steep path from the beach, passed by us in the pale moonlight, with softly-spoken salutations of peace, which the sitters promptly returned again.

"See us sitting here!" said Ahmad, pursuing his train of thought, "with all good things heaped up! Here in the Land of the Arabs, which has no crops save stones and sand. Whence, O my brothers, come all these good things? Do we supply provision to ourselves?"

"No! by God," responded those beside him. "God provides for whom He will."

"May He be praised and exalted," murmured everyone present.

"Ay, Wallah!" resumed Ahmad. "Here is a land in which is nothing—and here we sit eating and drinking and contented." Here words failed him in the fullness of his heart, as he thought of God's goodness to the

Arabs in their meagre country. "Everything is from God," he finished. "El hamdu Lillah—Praise to God."

To the Semites, God is always very near and very real—Boundless, Imminent. They feel themselves ever conscious of His Presence, whether in the temple or in the market-place, in sin or in prayer.

The moon, hanging near like a great lamp, rose higher—imperceptibly, but surely: a cool fluttering breeze blew from the northward: a gentle lap-lap of the dark voluptuous waters came faintly to the ear from the beach below: slowly the black shadows drew in to the fences and huts, leaving the ground about us defined in soft light: the fantastic form of the stem of Ahmad's shîsha shot up its three feet of height in the midst of the sitters: while the night air seemed to be informed with a peaceful influence such as could not exist in proximity to civilisation.

We smoked on, and murmured occasional remarks, as a company of contented cats might sit and purr, until I, feeling that no power on earth could longer hold me back from dropping asleep, assumed a recumbent position on my kursî. At once the dozing but watchful Umar rose to his feet, and produced a pillow and a blanket, which he insisted upon helping me to adjust—and so I slept till dawn.

VI

BIRK TO EL GUNFUDA

UPON getting up on the following morning, I was surprised to observe at a few yards' distance from our circle, two young women engaged in the same activity of rising—from kursîs placed outside a hut. In Muhammadan countries it is unusual for women to go outside their houses after dark, and it is needless to add that their sleeping in the street all night is unheard of—excepting at Birk apparently. The fact is that women are in a large majority among the population of this village, and as is usual when the supply of an article exceeds the demand for it, they are not very highly prized. I was informed that one might take to wife as many divorced women as he desired—of course within the legal limit of four—by paying a dowry equivalent to half a sovereign for each. Virgin girls were dowered at six or eight times that sum, or more.

I had arranged to travel in the company of Ahmad the merchant and another Mekkan named Hasan, and the two Indians were also to accompany us. Having breakfasted on bread and milk at the house of Muhammad, I went with him to the market-place to buy provisions for my journey. The staple dish for travellers in this part of Arabia is boiled rice and lentils mixed. To this may be added, after it is cooked, samn, meat, onions, dates, or merely salt and pepper. The usual drink is tea, prepared with much sugar but no milk. I purchased a water-skin (girba); a supply of rice, lentils,

onions, dates, dried bread, tea, sugar, honey, and a couple of water-melons. These things were placed in three small baskets.

About an hour after el 'asr (mid-afternoon) Umar came to the house of Muhammad to inform me that my fellow-travellers were about to walk to the outskirts of the village, where it had been arranged that I and they should join the caravan. Thereupon Muhammad called in a youth, who shouldered my saddle-bags and girba. My host and I then divided my baskets of provisions between us, and saying "bismillah," we set off with Umar to the place of *rendez-vous*. Our way led down into a hollow on the northern side of the village. Here was a grove of date palms, which grew so close under the hill of Birk that they were invisible from most parts of that village. Passing through these palm-trees, we came to a half-ruined gateway in a wholly ruined wall which extended from the low rocky spurs of the eastern hills to the sea—a distance of a mile and a half. On the crests of several of the hills which backed the village were half-ruined stone towers.

Arrived at the gate, we found the two Mekkans and the two Indians seated in its shadow, where we joined them. We had spent some minutes in desultory conversation, and in throwing stones at an unfortunate dog whose inquisitiveness seemed to be proof against even the broadest hints—and the heaviest—when the inane snout of the leading camel of our string came in sight, wavering sleepily through the palm stems, apparently on its way to keep an appointment for the day after to-morrow.

The string of camels had not yet reached us when one of the drivers passed energetically ahead of them, and approached us briskly.

"Up! Mount!" he cried busily.

My companions rose as one man, and stood in the sun to await the crawling camels. Arabs never do anything with precision. An Englishman would have remained seated in the shade until his animal stood before him, and then risen and at once mounted. My companions, having risen to their feet, stood there for fully half an hour, while the inevitable argument about nothing proceeded between themselves and the camel-drivers. It takes Arabs a long time to see what is essential and what is not. They are a race of pursuers of the side issue. The irrelevant has only to enter their thoughts in order to become the theme. So now they argued among themselves as to whether it would not be better to delay the start until they had prayed the sunset prayer. The camel-drivers said, "At sunset we will stand for you to alight and pray. Let us, then, start!" The Mekkans said, "O shaykh! it is better we pray here before we start, and then march straight on." Said one of the Indians, "Couch this camel, O my uncle! that I may spread my bedding upon his back." Said the Bedouin, "Let you spread with him standing, for now we start." Said one of the Mekkans, "Good! then we will start. Nothing against us!" Said the other Mekkan, "No! O shaykh, let it be after the sunset prayer." Here one of the Indians, having commenced to spread his lihâf (quilt) on a camel's back, the Bedouins made their camels couch, which before they had refused to do. Finally, at about five minutes before sunset, saying, "We have surrendered ourselves unto God," we all mounted and moved out of the gate. Arrived a few yards out on the sandy plain, one of the Mekkans commenced to chant the adân. It was sunset. All stopped and dismounted; and here, within a

stone's throw of our starting-place, we formed in a row to repeat the sunset prayer.

Our way now lay over a perfectly level sandy plain by the sea-shore. At intervals we passed, in the gathering dusk, groups of the dôm palm, and of the cactus shrub which bears the prickly pear. As we still passed on, the bleating of goats came forlornly out of the falling darkness, and anon we padded silently towards a group of dark standing figures—elusive and unreal in the moonlight. These, I thought, as we slowly approached them, are black-shrouded women of the Arabs herding their flocks in the silent night. But as we passed over the pale surface of the sand abreast of them, I saw they were nothing but black scrub-bushes growing there. Travelling thus by night on the tall pad-footed beasts, it seems to the rider borne at such height aloft, that he is silently gliding or swimming over a yielding unstable surface. Or it seems that the pale half-seen ground beneath him is fluid, and itself moves flowing past; and in it dark forms of unknown shapes appear dimly, gliding out of the limitless black spaces under the stars—till going closely by them, he sees in the moonlight that they are nothing but shrubs and trees. Into this silent ghostliness, the cry of a jackal comes as a sudden commonplace sound of the actual world.

Marching all through the night without a halt, we reached 'Imaq at earliest dawn. Here dôm palms and sidr (lote) trees spread their branches by the side of a spring of water, and the cool shaded ground beneath their swaying verdure was green with coarse grass. Further out on the plain was some small cultivation of durra. There was no permanent village here, but the Arabs encamp about the water in the time of the date harvest.

Here we rested all day, dozing out the hot hours in the grateful shade of the trees. At meal-times the division of the necessary labour was as follows—the camel-men gathered scrub for firewood, and fetched water; the Mekkans kindled the cooking-fire and Ahmad's shîsha; the Indians did the cooking; and I helped everybody—with advice and raw provisions chiefly.

At el 'asr we mounted again, and proceeded northward across the desert plain, which was here very wide, so that the eastern hills were only very dimly visible from our line of march. We saw a few flashes of lightning over the hills, and also a rainbow. Rain was evidently falling there from the heavy black clouds, and a few drops fell upon us as these passed over to seaward. The plain was thickly covered with camel grass, which vegetation, although it is wire-like and unbeautiful at close quarters, gave to the wide prospect a beauty of fresh greenness which was very solacing to the eyes. Occasionally we passed thick clumps of the ithl or tamarisk tree, and pleasant was the song of the afternoon wind through their plume-like branches.

Having marched ceaselessly all night, we passed at last, before dawn, nodding on our camels between sleeping and waking, through some thick clumps of scrub and tamarisk, and found ourselves in the dirty and ruinous village of Hallî. This is the frontier place between El Hijâz and El Yemen (or 'Asîr), and was at this time already in the occupation of the Wahhâbîs.

Hallî is a village of rush huts with a mud mosque, as are most of the coastal villages of western Arabia. It lies on the low plain at a little distance from the sea; and close to it, but further inland, is another village called Muckshîsh. The inhabitants of these villages

are a miserable shifty-looking crowd, and they have the reputation of being incorrigible thieves. They are also procurers of slaves, and my companion, Ahmad, wanted to buy a slave-girl here, or said he did. The old crone to whom he disclosed his proposition said she could show him a perfect specimen, but when she mentioned the price—it was seventy pounds—he did not pursue the matter. He told me that the "best sort possible" sell in Jidda for thirty pounds. This, however, I know to be far too low a figure at the present time.

We heard that there was a garrison force of four of Ibn Sa'ûd's Wahhâbîs at Hallî; but we saw nothing of them, and nobody attempted to inspect either us or our baggage. There are in Hallî between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and fifty huts. Its population may be five hundred souls.

The inland boundaries of 'Asîr are somewhat indefinite, as are those of every other principality in the peninsula. This province constitutes a rough square, the south-western side of which is formed by some seventy miles of the Red Sea coast-line—from the Wâdi 'Ashûr at Hallî on the north, to a point near the Idrîsi capital, Sobya, on the south. From Hallî, the north-western boundary line extends to the borders of the great desert called the Empty Quarter. On the south-east, 'Asîr is bounded by the Yemen, and on the north-east by the Empty Quarter. With the exception of the narrow plain of the Tihâma, this province is everywhere very mountainous.

Under the Turks, the capital was the mountain town of Abhâ, which is situated in the centre of the province. At present Abhâ is in the possession of Ibn Sa'ûd, as is the territory to the east and northward of that town; while the ruler of the Yemen has recently

occupied a considerable portion of the southern part of the province.

The population of 'Asîr may be a quarter of a million souls, one-fifth of whom are wandering Bedu while the remainder are settled. The bulk of the population inhabit the mountain districts. They are of the Shâfi'i school in religion, but their territory having been overrun and they themselves influenced by the Wahhâbîs at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they retain many of the customs of those puritans even to the present time. The recent re-occupation of a large part of 'Asîr by the Wahhâbîs was therefore welcomed by the majority of the inhabitants. Like the Wahhâbîs, they do not mark the graves of their dead, nor build domes above the tombs of the great; and their mosques are devoid of ornamentation.

Sulaymân Shafîg Kâmil Pasha, a former Turkish governor of 'Asîr, says of the inhabitants of the mountains of this province: "The most eloquent (or, the purest in speech) of the people of Arabia are the dwellers in the mountains of 'Asîr, and they use a truer pronunciation than do the common people of any other district. The tribes of Rabî'a and El Jahra, who dwell in Wâdi Dhalâ and Wâdi-r-Rudûm, speak the pure language (i.e. the language used in writing), and their pronunciation possesses an ease and a sweet melody as of versed poetry."

The two tribes which he mentions are said to number collectively some three or four thousand souls. They rear camels and goats in their wâdi dîras, but although they are said to possess abundant water, they do not till the ground. They are a peace-loving people, having the reputation of kindness and generosity to the guest, and the ghazû or raid is not practised among them.

Their tents are constructed of grass matting, which fact seems to argue the existence within their territory of lands sufficiently well watered to grow reeds without cultivation.

According to Kâmil Pasha, rich deposits of iron, lead, and sulphur, exist in the mountain groups called Jebel Sodâ and Jebel Sûga, westward of Abhâ. Copper is found in the dîra of Bani Shahar, which lies in the hills to the eastward of El Gunfuda, and rock-salt is common in the foot-hills which border the coastal plain. Petroleum has been discovered in the Farisân Islands which form part of this province.

The whole of the sea-coast of 'Asîr is protected by a chain of sand-banks and rocks, which renders it inaccessible to shipping, save at one or two small anchorages, as El Gahm.

Throughout this province, vegetation is less scanty than in any other part of Arabia save the Yemen. In the coastal plain, date, dôm, tamarind, and sidr trees, occur in scanty patches, together with fields of millet and dukhn. Bananas, peaches, limes, and almonds grow in the hill districts.

The monsoon rains fall copiously in November and December, and running streams may then be seen for days together. The wâdis run westward to the Tihâma, or eastward to the great desert, and the villages of the settled Arabs are built along their banks. A perennial and copious supply of water for irrigating the Tihâma might be ensured to the inhabitants by the construction of dams across some of these watercourses, at points where they pass through ravines in the rocky hills. In the uplands, ground water exists almost everywhere, at a depth of from ten to thirty feet below the surface.

The people of 'Asîr, like those of the Hijâz, are extremely jealous of the intrusion of non-Muslims into their country.

In the Hijâz, many tales are told of the obscene and bestial practises obtaining among many of the tribes of 'Asîr and El Yemen. One of these has it that the men of some of these tribes lend their wives to their guests. Others, if less heinous, are much more disgusting, and whether any of them are true or not I am unable to say.

Having rested and refreshed ourselves, we left the village of Hallî at about four o'clock in the afternoon, and rode for two miles through extensive millet fields to a place called Sulb.

This is a large green oasis of date palms and sidr trees. Some of the latter were laden with fruit, and our Arabs ran to collect the windfalls. The fruit of the sidr tree is a hard round berry, closely resembling a small crab-apple in outward appearance and in taste. It contains, however, a single stone similar to that of the cherry. This fruit is called Nabq, and sometimes the name is also given to the tree.

After passing through Sulb, we still found millet cultivation in patches for some distance; until all cultivation finally ceased, leaving the barren waste unadorned and undisturbed. Before dawn we reached a dry, shallow wâdi-bed, where we found a small collection of rush huts. This village, which is called Yebba, exists by reason of the wells which have been dug here in the wâdi. All the well-water along this coast is brackish.

We remained at Yebba only till midday, when we again mounted and moved on, through thick scrub

at first, until coming to the end of this, we found ourselves on a bare far-stretching plain of sand. The mountain range, far away to the eastward, was nearly invisible. As we advanced, it seemed to me that we were heading straight towards the sea. Then I saw that what I took to be the open sea was apparently a broad inlet which extended for miles inland. At its further edge were lines of trees, the forms of which were reflected in the water. Then I observed on the nearer bank, at a distance of two or three miles, the stone-built houses of a town. About and among these houses were the black-clad forms of men, but whether they stood to gaze at our passing camels, or whether they were moving about, I could not determine. Still we shuffled slowly forward over the flat plain, which was here encrusted with a shimmering deposit of salt; but the strange thing was, that although we continually advanced, we never seemed to approach any nearer to the waters of the inlet with its town and its trees. At last it dawned upon me that the whole spectacle was a mirage. The water and the town and the trees were no more than pulsing waves of refracted light over the crystal-strewn plain.

Late in the afternoon we passed by a long ridge or eminence, on our left hand, which formed a line of cliffs along the sea. Having passed this point, we rounded a curve in the coast and then, looking back, I saw the seaward face of these cliffs. I think they were probably of limestone or even chalk, as they looked too white to be sandstone. Several stone-built houses in ruins stood at intervals along their top. These, I heard, had once been country houses of some of the Ashrâf (sing. sharîf—a descendant of the Prophet) of Mekka.

At sunset we came in sight of the walls of El Gunfuda. The face of the desert here was covered by little hummocks of sand, topped by scrub. The setting sun seemed to tint even the air with a blend of old gold and rose as we passed through a large gap in the fortifications into the town. It gilded the swarthy faces of two gaunt Bedouins, armed with rifles, who eyed us with brief but piercing glance. Tall, and burnt by the sun to the colour of over-roasted coffee berries, with close-cropped moustaches and tufted chins, there was something in the carriage of these two braves which suggested that they were in abnormal surroundings. In their dark eyes, and on their brows, sat a stern intolerant expression; and a little detail of their clothing left no further doubt as to their identity. They wore on their heads, over the kefîya or kerchief, not the hair-rope 'agâl, but a rolled piece of white calico, as it were a turban. They were mudayyina (in the singular—"mudayyin," meaning one who is given up to religion—a term applied to the Wahhâbîs), and here in the Hijâz they sat in the seats of recent conquerors.

Scarcely had we ridden past these guards when I heard the sound of a deep throaty voice behind us, calling upon our camel-drivers to stop. The man who was at the head of our string stopped his animal.

"What hinders?" he asked.

"You are from Hallî?" asked one of the Wahhâbîs, who had turned to follow us.

"Ay, Wallah!" replied the other briefly.

"The loads—in them is what?" asked the mudayyin.

"By God! there is in them nothing," replied the man with conviction.

The Wahhâbî went up to the leading camel, and felt a sack.

"This—what is it?" he demanded sternly.

"There is in it nothing—except rice," he replied.

"And this?" questioned the Wahhâbî, feeling a sack on the second camel.

"This," repeated the camel-driver, feeling at the sack in his turn, "this is sugar."

Suddenly the Wahhâbî looked searchingly at my fellow-travellers and myself, as we sat our camels waiting.

"These riders—they are who?" he demanded.

"These . . ." began the camel-driver, but my companions cut him short.

"We are of the people of Mekka," they said.

"All of you?" he persisted.

"Ay, Wallah! of the people of Mekka," we all replied.

The object of all of us was to get past the guards into the town without delay. To do that we had to keep the Wahhâbî in a good humour, and not allow him to become suspicious. In the East, this sort of thing is usually accomplished by agreeing verbally with everything your questioner may say.

"Drive on!" ordered the guard briefly; and himself turned to walk beside our camels.

"To where?" asked the camel-driver.

"To the place of the Amîr," replied the Wahhâbî.

For a moment, seeing this guard keeping us under watch, I experienced a feeling of uncertainty. We had scarcely advanced fifty yards among the rush huts of the town, however, when the merchant Ahmad, catching sight of some Mekkan acquaintances who were passing, slid down off his camel and joined them, leaving the rest of us to proceed without him. Our Wahhâbî escort made no comment about this, and I

concluded, therefore, that his object in accompanying our caravan was to see that the loads which the camels bore were not unloaded until they had been inspected by the officers of the government. This proved to be the case. Passing through lanes of rush fences, with an occasional wall or house of mud, we came at last to an open space on a low platform-like eminence by the sea-shore. Here was a two-storeyed stone building, over which waved the green flag of Nejd—though its colour was scarcely to be distinguished in the falling dusk. On one side of this open space stood a large barn-like building, constructed of mud bricks. This, said my fellow-traveller, Hasan, was the custom-house. While he was giving me this information, he absent-mindedly lighted a cigarette and began to smoke. Suddenly a clear stern voice behind us said, in tones of anger and loathing, "O thou, drink not smoke!" We turned at once to see who had spoken, and Hasan dropped his cigarette hastily to the ground, and trod upon it. At the same moment, the Wahhâbî who had accompanied us from the gate cried out viciously, "O dog! Akhs! et-tiṭtun (tobacco)! Art thou a Muslim or a châfir?" (for "kâfir," i.e. unbeliever). Behind us in the gloom we saw standing a handsome youth, wearing a snow-white thawb of new calico, over which was strapped a leathern cartridge-belt filled with a row of revolver cartridges. From the belt depended a revolver in a polished leathern holster. Over his right shoulder ran a strap, which carried the silver-hilted sword which he wore at his left side. The youth, who was beardless, may have been eighteen or twenty years of age, and under his white head-kerchief he wore long ringlets of black hair which reached to the shoulder.

"You are from whence?" he asked with the quiet

sternness of a naturally polite youngster impressed with the importance of his position and responsibility.

"From Hallî," we replied.

"Are you of the people of Mekka?" he asked.

"Yes! of the people of Mekka," we assured him.

"It is upon you not to drink smoke," he said, and turning away, he left us.

Ahmad now appeared, coming out of the surrounding darkness accompanied by two other men wearing the Mekkan dress. He bade us unload our baggage from the camels, and accompany him to a hut which had been placed at his disposal. Before leaving the camels, I approached our Wahhâbî escort.

"Tell me, O shaykh!" I said, "that youth—is he the Amîr?"

"He is not the Amîr," he replied, "but of the Amîr's family."

"Of the Amîr's family," I repeated, and added as I turned away: "Peace be upon you."

"Peace be upon those who follow the Guidance" (the Korân), he replied acidly. The puritan Wahhâbî had seen my companion smoking, and a man is judged by the company he keeps.

VII

EL GUNFUDA TO EL LÎTH AND WÂDI YELAMLAM

THERE is no wakâla or inn in El Gunfuda, but there are a number of empty huts which the owners let for hire to travellers.

The population of the place consists of some 1,500 inhabitants. The town is built for the most part of rush huts which are square in form; unlike those of Birk, which, as has been noted, are beehive-shaped. In El Gunfuda the huts are lined with grass matting, as though it were wall-paper, secured to the walls by means of wooden skewers. There are a few mud houses in the town, and the two mosques and the Government headquarters are constructed of stone. The shape of the minarets of these mosques is peculiar, and I do not remember to have seen minarets of a similar form elsewhere. They are square and squat, some fifty feet in height, and the top is surmounted by a little round tower.

There is no wharf here, and the small coasting steamers which occasionally call at El Gunfuda, anchor at a little distance from the shore. A shallow wâdi, some 150 yards wide, runs down to the sea, close to the town on the southern side. This watercourse, called Wâdi Hârûn, is in flood for a few days each year at the season of the monsoon rains.

The market-place is a street of mud hovels, a hundred yards long, with another shorter street lead-

ing out of it. Here are sold dates, tobacco, tea, sugar, rice, lentils, dukhn, onions, bread, and a few other more or less edible substances. The latter include several sorts of sweetmeats, some of them of startling colours. Here myriads of flies sat at the receipt of custom, and took toll so assiduously that I am convinced that had I stayed to watch them a short time, I might have seen the lumps of sweetmeat disappear before my eyes, like pieces of ice placed in the sun.

There were also some good water-melons, some bananas from the hill groves towards Abhâ, and a few little apples.

Sauntering in this emporium with Abdul Câdir, one of my Indian fellow-travellers, on the morning after my arrival in the town, I observed a gaunt half-negro person sitting cross-legged in the deep dust of the street. Before him on the ground were spread several pieces of old sack-cloth and Bedouin hair-cloth, and upon these was displayed a remarkable collection of old brass coffee-pots, saucepans, camel halters, old knives, pieces of iron chain, rags, old sandals, pestles and mortars for grinding coffee, and fifty other old and battered indefinite articles. Though not perhaps unique, it was an amazing collection, and although the owner might have restocked his "shop" with intrinsically more valuable goods from any good-sized European dust-heap, yet here in the desert town, every rag and bone had its value.

My companion, Abdul Câdir, wished to buy a knife. Accordingly we approached the sitting merchant, and soon the process of price-adjustment was in full swing. While this was going forward, I noticed a solid-looking dark-green object lying among the coffee-pots, and picked it up. It was a little carved Chinese image, and

I felt certain it was of jade. It was the size of a small tea-cup, and represented a sitting Chinaman, pot-bellied and repulsive.

"What is this?" I asked of the Arab.

"Do I know?" he responded amiably.

"You will sell it for how much?" I asked.

The man did not answer for a moment, but glanced furtively at me, endeavouring to estimate my paying-power.

"Half a rîyâl," he said at last.

"Whence came this stone?" I asked him.

"A man was thrown up on the shore of the sea, and this was found in his pocket, and the mouth of the pocket was sewn up," he replied.

"Was he dead—the man?" I asked.

"Ay, wallah! Dead," he said unconcernedly. "The sharks had eaten a leg of his legs and his left hand."

"An Arab?" I asked.

"No, O shaykh! His appearance was like the people of Bokhâra," he said.

Abdul Câdir put down the knife he had been examining.

"Did you bury him?" he asked of the Arab.

"No! He was an unbeliever. The dogs ate him. Allah curse the unbelievers!" replied the Arab.

"How did you know he was an unbeliever?" asked Abdul Câdir.

"He was not circumcised," he said, "so we left him to the dogs."

"Perhaps he was of the people of China," I said.

"It is possible. And God is More Knowing," rejoined the Arab, re-arranging some of his stock.

"In any case he should have been buried; only not washed or prayed over," said Abdul Câdir.

"Nothing against us. The dogs ate him," said the Arab again.

Abdul Câdir having bought his knife, we made our way back to the hut. I would have purchased the Chinese image had it not been for the fact that the mere possession of graven images is a serious offence among Muslims.

We were informed by our landlord's son, a pleasant youth named Mahmûd, that the Wahhâbîs had occupied El Gunfuda with only seven men. This force had since been increased, and at the time of my visit consisted of twenty-five men. Mahmûd's opinion was that one Wahhâbî would have been quite sufficient to keep order in the town, as everybody was terrified of the Ikhwân of Nejd. Everyone with whom I spoke on the subject, however, admitted that the Nejders had committed no oppression or injustice in El Gunfuda, and that food was cheaper there than it had been in the days of King Husayn.

My companions made their arrangements to leave El Gunfuda on the day after our arrival, but I had found the younger of the Indian merchants, Abdurrahmân, rather too inquisitive for my liking, and I decided to let them proceed on their way without me. This man had observed me on two occasions writing notes. I do not think he knew what I was writing, as before he had a chance to see it I was able to open my note-book at its other end, where I had half written out the supplications and prayers used in the pilgrimage. However, I told Mahmûd, who was arranging for the hire of camels, that I wanted to rest in El Gunfuda a day longer. Thus when my four companions set out I remained behind.

On the following evening Mahmûd appeared in

the compound of our hut, followed by a Bedouin who was leading the camel which was to carry me to El Lîth. Having loaded my saddle-bags and other gear on the animal, we proceeded with it to the market-place in order to join the caravan which was about to set out for El Lîth. I found there were two Mekkans of the merchant class travelling with us, and the remainder of the camels composing the caravan, twenty in number, were laden with sacks of rice and other merchandise.

Soon after sunset we started, and travelling all night in a north-easterly direction, we halted at daylight in the open plain. We had marched for several hours after starting through lines of growing reeds, which are cultivated in the desert about El Gunfuda, to raise building material for the huts in the villages. The latter part of our journey was over flat sandy wastes, tufted with camel grass and occasional thorn bushes.

There was no water at our halting-place, and the only shelter from the sun's fiery heat was that supplied by a few scattered thorn bushes, bare of foliage. My fellow travellers were pleasant enough as chance acquaintances, as are most of the Arab race. One, middle-aged with a greying beard and crafty eyes, was named Ąbdul Latîf. During our halts he smoked continuously, using a shîsha with a bowl as large as a tea-cup. This bowl he filled with jurâk, which is a sticky solid mixture of tamarind, molasses or date extract, sandalwood, tobacco, and usually opium and cloves. It is a very strong smoking mixture, producing a pungent aromatic smoke, and requires frequent fresh burning charcoal placed in the pipe-bowl to keep it alight. The Arabs say that a smoker of jurâk requires to eat much good food, and that its use excites the

sexual appetite. I tried it once in Mekka subsequently, and made myself dizzy with three inhalations. Abdul Latîf's companion, a polite youngster named Sâlih, lost no time in handing me a cup of their tea as soon as he had prepared it. This act brought us into fellowship, and from then onwards we pooled our company and our provisions. Lying in the scanty shade of the thorn bushes, we did our best to slumber away the hot midday hours until the time of el 'asr, when, the camels having been caught and loaded again, we resumed our march. In the daytime the Arabs turn their burden camels loose, to graze, with the saddles still on their backs. Most of the animals have large galls and sores under the saddle, and the burning sun striking upon their bare backs would inflame them the more. Their thousands of years' experience in camel-mastership do not seem to have been sufficient for the Arabs to have evolved a really good saddle for burden camels.

At sunset we crossed a shallow wâdi, some two hundred yards in breadth, and found ourselves before the village of El Mudhaylif. It had been the intention of our camel-drivers to encamp at El Mudhaylif that morning, but having been delayed by losing the track during the night, and the sun rising, they had put down in the open plain. This miscalculation gave us a night's rest, which is an unusual luxury in Arabian travelling. The Arabs prefer to march by night, whatever the season of the year. To a stranger, this arrangement is doubly distasteful, as it is not only physically uncomfortable, but it limits observation of the country.

El Mudhaylif is a small village which owes its existence to the proximity of several deep wells. The water from these wells is brackish, and reeks strongly of the disgusting smell of camels. At the village a weekly

market is held, to which the Bedouins come in from the surrounding wastes to buy or barter rice, clothing, and other town wares from El Gunfuda. El Mudhaylif is famed above other places for its camel ticks and rats, and distinction in such matters is not easily achieved in Arabia. The ground for a mile and more about the wells is infested with the former pest, and several of these vermin showed their appreciation of European blood by fastening themselves to my toes while I slept. As for the rats, it is only necessary to relate that cats were selling at three mejîdis (six shillings) per head in El Mudhaylif, and three mejîdis is a week's salary for a man in El Mudhaylif, or a month's salary if you feed him at your own expense.

We slept the night at this place, and left it on the afternoon of the next day. Marching over sand-flats with occasional undulations dotted with scrub, we came at midnight to a large wâdi-bed called Dôga. We halted here to empty our girbas of the unclean Mudhaylif water, and to refill them at the well. The water here was the best I had tasted since leaving Birk. We then continued our march until dawn, when we encamped in the open desert amongst dry thorn bushes and camel grass. The mountains to the eastward were only faintly visible from this point.

Soon after we had halted, a score of Yemen Arabs from Sanaa, mounted on little rats of donkeys, passed up and camped further on. They were pilgrims on the way to Mekka.

At mid-afternoon we mounted again, and rode all through the night, arriving as the sun rose at Najî'a. Here there are six large wells which yield brackish water. Large flocks of goats and sheep, together with some droves of camels, were being watered as we

came up. We rested here during the heat of the day, and when the flaming sun began to sink westwards, we mounted and pursued our journey over a flat sandy plain until soon after midnight, when we got among the low sand dunes which extend in a broad belt about the town of El Lîth. As the light slowly smudged its way into the eastern sky, we saw before us a small grove of palm-trees, and behind this, on rising ground, the blunt square outlines of low mud-built houses. The sun was rising above the grey dunes as we urged our beasts up the yellow slope towards the rush fences of El Lîth. A small gateway in the first fence led into a compound beside the house of one named Sayyid 'Ali, who was the principal merchant of the town. The ground within this compound was littered with old straw, camel dung, and other refuse; and leaving the camel-drivers to look after their beasts, the two Mekkans and I passed through another gate, which gave access to a small courtyard with a clean floor of beaten earth. Beyond this was Sayyid Ali's house—an oblong mud structure of a single storey. On one side of the courtyard was a small thatch shed open at one side. This was the guest chamber. My companions, who knew the place, made their way towards the shed, bidding me to accompany them.

Having performed our ablutions and prayed, which matter is always the first care of the better-class town Arabians, we sat in the guest-hut to await events. Abdul Latîf, having prepared his shîsha, sat contemplatively smoking, while Sâlih rolled and smoked frequent cigarettes. Occasionally they exchanged remarks about the prices of rice and sugar, of goats and tobacco. Myself, I sat drooping somewhat with the fatigue and famishment of the long aching night

marches and the comfortless noonday halts of my long journey. I shall never cease to admire the careless fatalism with which the Arabians accept famine or banquet, idleness or strenuous exertion. Inured to their hard lives from youth, in a land where the sudden strife of Bedouin tribes, or the no more sudden storms of the seas, may plunge even the great cities into semi-starvation; a land in which a journey of thirty miles is a day-long effort of physical strength, they expect little from life in this world, and, never railing against their fate, they submit with patient serenity to God's will.

Presently there entered the courtyard a cadaverous-looking young man, whose Bedouin clothes of thawb and cloak and head-kerchief were clean and handsome. He greeted us with the salutation of peace, and then, as we resumed our seats after rising to greet him, he called in another youth of a humbler aspect and bade him go and prepare coffee and breakfast for us.

While we sat eating our breakfast of dates and bread, there entered a short thin old man leaning upon a long staff. He was dressed in a snow-white thawb and kerchief, and wore a small white beard and moustache. His face bore an expression of grave kindness as he greeted all present in a feeble voice. This was Sayyid Ali, a descendant of the Prophet. Later, as I began to question him of the Wahhâbî invasion, he surprised me by frankly condemning it. Sayyid Ali was the first among these careful Arabs whom I had heard say a good word for the ex-king, though in their hearts all the town-dwellers and most of the Hijâzi Bedouins hated the Wahhâbîs. Before my departure, my host's servant discreetly asked me several times how much I proposed to give the old man in return for his entertaining me in his house. Old Ali himself begged me to

return and settle in El Lîth after the pilgrimage, saying that he would provide me with a wife.

El Lîth is situated some three miles from the sea-shore, on a small hill which is scarcely more than a mound. Its houses, square-shaped and for the most part of a single storey, are constructed of mud with the addition of wooden beams. There are also some rush huts, and the local coffee-house is a square enclosure fenced with reeds and partly roofed with thatch at one end. The coffee-drinkers sit on the floor of beaten earth. Water is procured from two wells, a quarter of a mile and half a mile respectively outside the village, to the eastward. There is a considerable grove of date palms to the north-west of the village, and water-melons are also cultivated. The original inhabitants are of the tribe of Curaysh.

Later in the day, as we sat in the stifling heat of the shed, there came in one who had just arrived from Mekka. This was a rather thin, sallow-faced person, with a heavy moustache and a bristly chin. His name was Shafîg and he was a mutawwif, though the object of his present journey was trade. Shafîg, learning that I was a hâjji, lost no time in improving my acquaintance; and as he himself would not return to Mekka for some days, he gave me a note addressed to a friend of his, one Abdurrahmân, who, he assured me, would be pleased to receive me under his roof in Mekka.

My encounter with this man was a fortunate chance, as having broken with Abdulla and Jamîl, I knew nobody in the Holy City to whose house I could go upon my arrival there.

Arabs never miss an opportunity of picking up unearned increment, and are eternally trying to evolve new ways of doing it. Accordingly, a former Sharîf of

Mekka, 'Aun er-Rafîg (he died, full of years and piety, in 1323 A.H.), bethought him of selling to the mutawwifs the right to act as hosts and guides to pilgrims coming from specified places. In this way it became compulsory for every pilgrim from, say, Jaffa, to place himself in the hands of the mutawwif who had bought the Jaffa rights from the Sharîf. If he did not do this he would be obliged to live as a Pasha, and hire a house and servants for himself, or as a beggar and sleep in the street, for no other than the Jaffa mutawwif dare give him hospitality for fear that he should be accused of "hâjji stealing."

When Ibn Sa'ûd took Mekka he endeavoured to abolish this custom, and gave it out in a proclamation that the hâjjis were no longer bound to follow the mutawwifs of their districts, but were free to lodge with whom they would. "The Mighty Mahmûd" could not prevail in that matter, however, for public opinion is too strong in this fraternal and insulated community. The mutawwifs' rights are hereditary, and the system of allotting districts to certain mutawwifs is now once more officially recognised, as it was in the days of the Sharîfs. Most pilgrims are provided with the name of their mutawwif by the shaykh of their village, or by some hâjji who has already been to Mekka. All they have to do, therefore, on arrival at the Holy City, is to ask for their host.

An hour or so after noon, Sayyid Ali sent his servant to call us into the house to eat. Upon entering the low doorway, before which hung a piece of grass matting, I found myself in a long narrow apartment, the earthen floor of which was beaten hard and flat and covered with large pieces of rush matting. The room was some ten feet wide and twenty-five feet long. On the floor at

one end old Ali was sitting cross-legged, counting off his muttered exclamations of religious fervour on his string of beads. In contrast with the flaming heat of the midday sunshine without, the interior of the mud-built house was as cool as some sweet tree-shaded garden.

"Subhân Allah!" muttered Sayyid Ali, moving his beads one by one along the string. "Allah Akbar! Lâ Ilâha ill Allah!" (Glory to God! God is greatest! There is no god but The God!)

Saying "bismillah," I and my three companions, Abdul Latîf, Sâlih and Shafîg, seated ourselves before the old man, and having taken his hand we sat back against the mud wall. Ali handed to each of us a little plaited grass fan, and as I flapped mine slowly to and fro, I looked about me. The room in which we sat was bare of all furniture save the mats on the floor, and a kursî at the farther end. One other embellishment the room possessed, and that was a collection of glass and of china vessels, ranged along a narrow shelf high up on the long wall opposite to me. The glass vessels were empty bottles, most of them still bearing coloured labels adorned with names and trade-marks. There were vinegar bottles, sauce bottles, mineral-water bottles, pickle bottles, and even a beer bottle or two. These priceless pieces had doubtless been acquired, during years of keen collecting, from the cook's galleys of the little steamers which occasionally call at El Lîth. The china consisted of a number of thick earthenware plates, cups, and saucers—each of them differing from most of the others in pattern. They were far too precious to be used, excepting as ornaments. Most of the bottles were hung by the neck, like condemned malefactors, from the under side of the wooden shelf. This was done

I suppose, in order to ensure that their admirers did not carry them away, or drop them while examining them.

Having eaten our dinner of rice and boiled meat, followed by water-melon and coffee, we retired to the shed where our baggage was lying, leaving Ali to enjoy his siesta.

At mid-afternoon I went with Shafîg to the mosque to perform the prayer of el 'asr. Like all the non-Turkish mosques of Western Arabia, that of El Lîth consists of a square walled enclosure, unroofed save for a narrow cloister at the mihrâb end.

Walking in the village after leaving the mosque, we found the narrow dust-filled channel between mud hovels which is the market-place packed confusedly with groaning camels. Some were couched in the hot dust: some stood looking awkwardly about them, making little futile groans of protest at the general discomfort of life; others, in the act of kneeling, snarled and bubbled at their Bedouin masters. The latter cursed throatily as they jerked at the halters with an air of tense energy, as is their manner. One camel persisted in trying to rise, although its doubled fore-leg was bound with the end of its halter. Eventually the Bedouin in charge of it picked up a block of stone, weighing probably thirty pounds, and threw it on the camel's head. This act achieved its object completely, as the unfortunate animal barraked obediently, making feeble groans. These camels were being loaded with grain for Mekka. Jidda being closed, all the imported articles for the Holy City had to be landed at El Lîth or El Gunfuda.

My two companions wished to buy some sacks of sugar here, in order to sell it in Mekka at a profit. For

this purpose they found it necessary to stay for the night in El Lîth. Although caravans were leaving for Mekka every few hours, I decided to remain with them, being glad of the opportunity of enjoying a night's rest.

At sunset the next day (21st June) we mounted the camels which Sayyid Ali had hired for us, and made our way to the edge of the palm groves, where the remainder of the caravan was assembled. Passing through the palms, we came out upon a sandy plain unrelieved by hills or vegetation as far as the eye could see. The camel track led across this plain in a direction slightly east of north. Darkness fell quickly about us as we advanced. The camels padded on ceaselessly over the elusive surface of the ground, half seen in the moonless night.

The light of dawn found our beasts still pacing forward with the blind fatalism of sleep-walkers, and showed us the sharp outline of a low range of rock hills to eastward. At sunrise we reached Khadra. Here the track entered among the low spurs and detached rocks of the foot-hills. To westward lay the flat plain which extends to the sea, while to the east and north-east the hills rose dimly, rank behind rank, in the far distance. Great pinnacles and buttresses of granite emerged, stark and black, from the sea of golden sand. From a distance some of these masses of rock, perpendicular-sided and flat-topped, looked like old massive castles standing in the hot silent wilderness, and it was difficult to believe they were not the work of men's hands.

At Khadra there is a well of brackish water, and about it a few rush huts have been built, whose owners sell twisted ropes of dry camel grass as fodder for the beasts of the passing caravans—for, in the country hereabouts, as bare of vegetation as London Bridge,

even the camel can find nothing to eat. The well lies in the bottom of a large sandy depression, and all about it the caravans encamp.

Upon arrival at this place I found that my two companions, Abdul Latîf and Sâlih, had become detached, with their camels, from our caravan during the night. I did not see them again on the journey; but meeting Sâlih subsequently in Mekka, I learnt that together with one of the camel-drivers they had travelled by the route of Saadîya, which passes near Et-Tâif, while I and the remaining two Bedouins went by Yelamlam—a route somewhat nearer the sea-coast.

As I sat eating with my Bedouin companions—they were of the tribe of 'Atayba—I could not refrain from complimenting them upon the unwinking skill with which they swallowed fistfuls of hot boiled rice, the temperature of which I judged to be something over 200 degrees Fahrenheit. They grinned modestly at my remark, and one of them, Khâlid by name, still continuing to claw up handfuls of the scalding mess and knead it into hard compact balls before passing it smartly into his mouth, told me that in the 'Atayba dîra (territory) he had frequently sat down to eat from a boiling pot with the fire still underneath it. The other rascal, sitting with us on the sand round the tin dish, swore with great oaths, "Wallah, this was true, by the life of thy beard!" After we had finished our meal, a flock of pretty blue pigeons fluttered down to the place where we had sat, and proceeded to peck up the few grains of rice which lay there.

At mid-afternoon, as we were in the act of mounting our camels, there approached us a Sudanese, black but comely, who desired that our Bedouins would

mount his wife as far as El Khurga for ten Egyptian piastres. The poor young woman, a mere girl, and like the man, nearly naked, was obviously soon to suffer the ordeal of maternity. The Bedouins, however (who are credited as a race with possessing the attribute of generosity), refused to mount her for less than a rîyâl and a half—three times the amount tendered by the Sudâni. Half the sum demanded would have been a fair amount, even had there been no special circumstances to suggest a reduction.

The truth is that the Arab's generosity is often the result of mere ostentation, or more frequently, of care for his own preservation. The Arab, a Semite as is the Jew, is essentially a grasper—one who takes but does not give. He must entertain the guest, and protect the fugitive from blood-vengeance; for, if he failed to do so, then he himself could not expect hospitality and protection in the day of his own need. This is the poor origin and psychology of the Arab's generosity; but, growing out of it, has come a spirit which in many instances has led to deeds of quite quixotic heroism. Only, much depends upon the way in which an appeal to their honour is made. A bloody-handed murderer of their own race would know far better how to arouse their generosity than would a stranger, however deserving.

The Sudanese, who knew only a few words of Arabic, unsuccessfully tried to move the callous indifference of the Bedouins—holding out his poor coin with a pleasant face, while the girl stood meekly by. I thought I had never seen anything so moving as this black girl, standing, with a half-shy half-wondering smile on her child-like face, watching her husband converse with the Bedouins in a strange tongue. At

last, one who observed the scene sternly bade the Bedouins to fear God and remember the poor girl's state, and to mount her for twenty piastres, and he would pay the difference. This, Khâlid finally agreed to do, his scowls suddenly turning to an amiable expression as he couched one of the camels and helped to arrange the saddle for the girl to ride on.

As we moved off, I observed numbers of poor African pilgrims marching by the side of the track on their feet—men, women, and children, stepping out with the simple unconsciousness of those who perform something inevitable, along the sun-scorched way to Mekka. The men for the most part wore nothing but a waist-cloth, and an amulet or two hung about the neck or attached to the arm. The women wore a piece of calico, unbleached and dirty, wound round the waist and extending to the knees. Another piece of the same material was wrapped about the breasts, passing over one shoulder; though some of them wore a sort of long shirt or smock. They carried their babies on the hip or the back—the infant being supported by the piece of calico which was passed around it. The children went naked as worms. These poor people had gourds and tin cans in which to carry their food and water, and the men for the most part carried thin spears some five feet in length. They almost invariably tramp every yard of the land journey on their feet, being too poor to hire camels.

I have been told by Africans from the Southern Sudan settled in Mekka, that many of their race occupy two years and even longer on the journey to the Holy City. Most of them take their wives and children with them, and babies are frequently born to the poor women during the journey.

The camel track now wound between towering rock pinnacles and other smaller outcroppings of stone, until, at sunset, we found we had left the maze of stones behind us and were again in a wide sandy plain. At one point we passed a dozen little mounds by the wayside, each of which was surmounted by two rough pieces of stone. This was a desert graveyard. Another hour of travelling brought us among low sand dunes, and we continued to travel through these until we arrived, just before dawn, at a place called Umm el Khayr, where we camped.

Umm el Khayr is a slight depression in the undulating plain. There was a well of excellent water here, and round about it the ground was green with camel grass.

As I and the two camel-drivers were making tea, another caravan came into the depression and proceeded to encamp. Presently, just as I was making myself comfortable in order to sleep, a Bedouin from this caravan came across to us, and giving us the usual salutation "es-salâm 'alaykum," asked me if I knew the "language of Java." It appeared that he had a Malay travelling with him, who had fallen from his camel on his head during the night, and had become torpid in consequence.

Although the Malays never go on pilgrimage unless they have sufficient money for the purpose, they often suffer great hardship by reason of their inability to cope with the deceit and greed of the Arabs. The climate, too, which is so different from their own, frequently takes great toll of their numbers. It says a great deal for the religious faith of this gentle-mannered race of lazy children that so many of them save money for years in order to have the means to brave the terrors and discomforts of the Mekka pilgrimage.

I went with the Bedouin to look at his Malay, whom I found lying under a blanket, in the scanty shade of a thorn bush. Uncovering his head, I saw the lined brown face of a middle-aged Malay. As I spoke to him in his own tongue, he opened his eyes and endeavoured to answer me. Learning that he had not broken his fast, I sent the Bedouin to fetch a water-melon which I had in my baggage. Having fed the Malay with some of this, I found him revive somewhat. He told me that, nodding half asleep on his camel in the night, he had fallen to the ground which, fortunately for him, happened to be of loose sand. I gathered from his starved and forlorn appearance that his present torpor was chiefly due to under-nourishment and lack of amusement. As a remedy for the latter ailment I set him to cook some rice for our joint dinner, feeling that that occupation would amuse him far more than it could possibly amuse me; and while he thus disported himself, I slept the peaceful sleep of one who has found a cure for one of life's most irksome duties. Later, as we sat round the great tin dish with the Bedouins, clawing up fistfuls of rice and samn, the Malay told me something of his past. It appeared that he had been the happy possessor of a small pepper plantation near Telok Betong in Southern Sumatra. Then his wife and two children had died, and our friend had "become mad," to use his own phrase. Eventually he had decided to perform the pilgrimage, which brings health to the Muslim soul as a trip to a watering-place brings physical health to the European. Taking ship from Batavia, he had landed at Madras—not for any particular reason, but merely because the ship went there. Crossing India in course of time, from Madras to Bombay, he had sailed from the latter port, in a dhow,

to Makalla in Hadhramaut. Travelling partly by land and partly by sea, he had come along the coast, touching at Aden, Mokha, El Hodayda and El Lîth; and now, although not yet arrived in Mekka, he commenced eagerly to question me as to the relative positions of El Medîna, El Mesjid el Aksâ (Jerusalem), and Khalîl er-Rahmân (Hebron), and the means of reaching those places. He wrote down my answers in a small notebook, which he took from the pocket of an old drill-jacket which he wore above his sarong. (The sarong is a skirt-like garment reaching from waist to ankle. It is peculiar to the inhabitants of the East Indies.)

Having finished eating, he took from his pocket a string of beads, and commenced to mutter repeatedly some short invocation, though I could not catch the whispered words. Presently he wrote something in his notebook, and then went on muttering. I asked to see the notebook, and found it half filled with figures. The explanation was that Abdul Hamîd, for such was his name, in order to improve his chances of reaching Paradise, had vowed to repeat the chapter of the Korân entitled *Sincerity* 777,777 times before he reached Mekka. Whenever he completed an even hundred of repetitions, he made a note of the achievement in his book. The total of his figures was added up at the bottom of each page, and I noticed with a shock of regret that Abdul Hamîd would soon reach the end of his great work—the poor soul had only another couple of thousand repetitions left him before completing his vow. He had no idea of the meaning of the words which he uttered, but in spite of that he appeared to entertain so great a faith in the soul-saving value of his exercise that I decided to put him up

another thousand. I informed him that the Prophet's cousin, Ibn 'Abbâs, tells us, on the authority of the Prophet himself, that the Muslim who repeats Chapter *Sincerity* one thousand times on Mount 'Arafa on the day of the pilgrimage, will be granted whatosever he asks of God, however many and great his sins may have been. This pleased Abdul Hamîd exceedingly, and he made a badly spelt note of it in his little book. He said he hoped to die and be buried in Mekka, which would ensure his entry into the Garden in any case, but he was glad to have a second means of attaining to that glorious end in case the first means should not be granted to him.

That simple soul could see Paradise before him—a beautiful material Paradise, to be reached by deeds of the material flesh. There it was: just up there in the sky somewhere. He could not see it, but he knew it was there. A place where work was unknown, and soft and sensuous play filled all existence. Repeat, repeat the task and earn good marks! And no harm in writing down the score in a notebook of your own, so as to know how you stand.

What presumption! What touching pathos! What magnificent completeness of simple faith! To win your way to very Paradise by the frequent repetition of words whose meaning you do not understand, and to write down in a penny notebook the proof of your eligibility!

Chapter *Sincerity* is a fine declaration of the Unity of God:—

"In the Name of God, the Very Merciful: the Merciful.

"Say—He is God—One. God the Everlasting.

"He begetteth not; neither is He begotten. And He has no equal."

At mid-afternoon we loaded and moved off. Our way now lay across an undulating plain, the hollows of which were still green with the tender herbage of the spring grass. Occasionally outcroppings of granite, and sometimes of schist, appeared in the sandy ground. Away to the eastward were visible the heights of Jebel Kura. At sunset the fickle Bedouins decided to camp for the night, because "they were hungry and wanted to eat something cooked."

We slept comfortably that night—the Malay and myself—on the slope of a low hill, and we did not remove until the following noon—because the Arabs felt tired.

Having started at midday, we marched for a couple of hours across the plain, and then entered a narrow pass between low rocky hills. We now came to an appalling country. Beneath the feet of our beasts the ground was strewn with black stones of all shapes and sizes. These stones looked as though, lying in the burning sunlight, they had become blackened by the heat of the centuries. On our right rose hills of the same deadly blackness, in height ranging between two hundred and six hundred feet. These, in their shapeless ugliness, appeared like uncouth masses and piles of dead cinders lying in that ghastly place; while the ash-grey sand which covered the ground at their bases served to heighten their appearance of great burnt-out fire-heaps.

The sun, flaming down into the stifling pits which we traversed between these hills, seemed to drain the very life from my body, so that I found it difficult to

keep upright on my camel. I frequently damped a kefîya or kerchief with water from my girba, and tied this about my head. The Bedouins mounted two of the camels, and lay along their backs in torpid indolence. The Sudanese girl sat her camel uncomplainingly, her head and shoulders covered with a piece of unbleached calico. Her husband and another black man picked their way painfully among the stones, at the rear of the string of camels. The Malay lay curled up looking like a sack of merchandise on his jerking beast.

As the sun sank westward, it assumed the appearance of burnished copper, ringed about with a fiery halo. Before me, I could see a gap between the stony hills, whose perpendicular sides descended to a wâdi-bed of smooth sand. The sun was slowly sinking, but still its vicious heat caused a droughty faintness in the body, while the stagnant atmosphere seemed to obstruct rather than assist the act of breathing. I leant forward on my camel, tensely waiting for the moment when the animal would put its slow foot into the shadow cast by the hills to our left front. It seemed as though we should never reach that blessed shade. The camels seemed still to pad for hours slowly forward, and yet all the while I could see the longed-for shadow lying across the rock-strewn ground ahead of us, and all the while that burning eye to westward glared mercilessly across the world.

At last the camel's fore-foot trod upon ground where no light was; but I myself, perched high upon the animal's back, was still in the red glare. It seemed minutes more before the heedless beast placed its other foot forward, and brought me at last into the sweet relief of the hill's shadow.

A few minutes more, and the camels had descended into the wâdi-bed. Then it seemed that at once the whole of existence was changed. A sweet cool breeze blew down the great hill-walled water-course—playing about our fevered bodies like angel hands. Before us, in the wide bed of the wâdi, rose the stone parapet of a great circular well. Towards this we hastened, the camels moaning feebly and straining their necks.

This was the well El Khurga in the Wâdi Yelamlam. It is one of the stations at which travellers to Mekka assume the ihrâm—the dress of one who enters the Sacred Place.

VIII

WÂDI YELAMLAM TO MEḲKA

AT El Khurga the Wâdi Yelamlam is two hundred and fifty yards in width. It is floored with coarse grey sand. For the distance of a mile and a half it runs in the direction north-east to south-west, and on its north-western side the hills form a nearly perpendicular wall of rock. Its south-eastern bank at this point is a gradually ascending slope of yellow sand, rising from the wâdi bed; and far beyond this slope to the eastward is a towering mass of rock, apparently limestone, which was coloured a golden pink when I saw it in the setting sun. It appeared to be four or five thousand feet in height. The Bedouins named it Jebel Yelamlam, and informed me that the wâdi, sweeping to the eastward —as I afterwards saw—at a point a mile and a half north-ẹast of El Khurga, winds away in a south-easterly direction under the base of this great mountain.

The wall of rock which overhangs the wâdi on its north-western side terminates sharply some half a mile below El Khurga, and from that point the wâdi flows out over the level plain to the Red Sea.

The well El Khurga is a beautifully constructed circular shaft, fourteen feet in diameter inside the orifice. It is lined with great stone blocks, nearly three feet in thickness at the top. The parapet rises three and a half feet above the bed of the wâdi, and several stone steps lead up to its top. Upon it the Arabs stand in order to let down their leathern buckets. At the time

of my visit the water was thirty feet below the ground level. It was by far the best water I had tasted since leaving Egypt: being clearer than unfiltered Nile water, and as sweet.

Arrived at the well, we dismounted and drank copiously. I then took from my saddle-bags my ihrâm, which consisted of two large Turkish towels without any seam in them. It matters not of what material the ihrâm consists, so long as it is not of silk, which latter is unlawful at all times. The ihrâm may be of any colour, but white is preferred, and there must be no seam in either of the two garments, or pieces of material, which compose it. The pilgrim must leave his head bare, though a sunshade or the hands may be used to shield it from the rays of the sun. The instep of the foot must be left uncovered, and in order to conform to this stipulation sandals are usually worn.

The Malay, Abdul Hamîd, being ignorant of the procedure, brought his ihrâm to the place where I had put my baggage, and prepared to imitate my actions. Having stripped off our clothes, we performed total ablution by pouring water over ourselves, and after drying we donned the ihrâm—one piece of material (the "izâr") being secured round the waist and extending to the ankles, the other (the "ridâ") being thrown over the shoulders. As the ihrâm is about to be assumed the "intention" is repeated, either aloud or mentally. This may be expressed in some such words as "I have 'ihrâmed' for the Hajj as an act of duty to Almighty God." The nâwi, or purposer, stands facing towards Mekka. After this we prayed a prayer of two prostrations, called "the sunna," or religious custom, of ihrâm. The sunna in any connection is the Prophet's example, which became law and remains so—being

only less absolute than the precepts contained in the Korân itself. We next repeated the "intention" of performing the Hajj—"I have purposed the Hajj and assumed the ihrâm for it, in conformity to God's command. Accept it of me, and make it blessed unto me, O Lord of the Worlds!"

After this we said the "talbiya," which we repeated at intervals from now onwards until we stood before the Kaaba in the Haram of Mekka. The "talbiya" in transliterated Arabic is as follows:—

"Labbayk, Allahumma, Labbayk!
"Labbayk, lâ sharîka laka, Labbayk!
"Inna'l hamda wa-n-ni'amata laka wa-l mulk.
"Lâ sharîka laka, Labbayk!"

This may be interpreted:—

"Here am I, O God, at Thy command!
"Here am I. Thou hast no partner. Here am I!
"Verily praise and grace and kingship are Thine.
"Thou hast no partner. Here am I!"

After this follows the supplication for blessings on the Prophet, together with other supplications which need not here be mentioned.

To an European, who has all his life been fully clothed, the ihrâm is the most comfortless form of dress conceivable, and its use, continued for a period of days, almost amounts to torture. It is absolutely obligatory for a Muslim to wear it in order to perform the rites of the Hajj or the 'Omra (the lesser pilgrimage). The idea that a Muhammedan may conscientiously enter Mekka in his ordinary clothes by sacrificing a sheep as alms is incorrect. Only in the event of his being ill could he do that, and in that case he would not be able to perform either the Hajj or the 'Omra,

but would be obliged to assume the ihrâm before he could accomplish either.

The territory surrounding Mekka for some distance is sacred. In it no fighting may take place; no living thing be killed, save animals for food, or vermin; no plant be cut down. The extent of this sacred ground varies in different directions, but it extends to an average distance of twenty miles or so from the centre of the city. At some distance before entering the sacred limits, the Muslim assumes the ihrâm, and several stations have been appointed on the main roads for this purpose. They are called "el mîkât el makâni," and are as follow:—

1. Du-l Halîfa (or Abyâr Ali), one camel march south of El Medina.

2. Râbigh, on the sea-coast north of Jidda, for hâjjis coming down the Red Sea from Egypt. They put on the ihrâm when their ships are abreast of this place.

3. Yelamlam, on the Yemen road, two camel stages from Mekka. (This station, which is also called El Khurga, I have just described.)

4. Carn, on the Seyl road to Nejd, two stages east of Mekka.

5. Dât 'Irg, on the Darb esh-Shargi,* two stages north-east of Mekka.

6. Wâdi Muhrim, in a valley behind Jebel Kura, between Mekka and Et-Tâif.

At the moment when the pilgrim assumes the ihrâm he is obliged to regulate his life anew to some extent. Many little matters which may have been his daily habits must now be relinquished, until he is able to discard the ihrâm. Below is given a list of acts which

* The Darb esh-Shargi is the eastern-most of the three caravan roads which connect Mekka and El Medîna.

are unlawful to one wearing the ihrâm, together with the penalties incurred by committing them.

It is unlawful for a muhrim (i.e. a wearer of the ihrâm) to wear any garment which has a seam in it; to cover his head; to cut his hair or his nails; or to shave. The penalty for infringement of this rule is that the offender shall slay a sheep, and distribute the flesh to the poor as an alms.

The Muhammadan jurists, who enter into the most absurdly minute details when laying down the law, affirm that in the event of a muhrim cutting off no more than twelve of his hairs, a handful of wheat is a sufficient alms for him to distribute in order to atone for that misdemeanour. Similarly, the penalty for cutting only one or two of his nails is a bushel of wheat, instead of a sheep.

It is unlawful for a muhrim to use scent on his body, clothes, or bed; or in his food, drink, snuff or ointment. Infringement of this rule is atoned for by the sacrifice of a sheep.

It is unlawful for him to hunt, kill, drive roughly away, or scare, any animal save dangerous creatures. He may not cut grass, nor tree, nor plant, within the Haram limits. The penalty for infringement is a sheep.

He may not perform the sexual act. There is no atonement for this. It renders his pilgrimage null and void, and he must commence it all over again. If it were too late for him to assume the ihrâm anew, he would perforce have to wait until the following year, or a later year.

The penalties are paid at Mina during the pilgrimage, upon the return of the hâjjis from 'Arafa.

We remained two hours at El Khurga and then, having eaten and rested somewhat, we moved off

again. Now it was that I performed the most uncomfortable thirty-six hours of travelling that I have ever experienced. I found it impossible to keep warm at night in the ihrâm; and, in addition to this, the ropes and the pommel of the jerking saddle rubbed the skin off my legs.

We marched up the wâdi in a north-easterly direction for over half an hour, and then, leaving it at the point where it turned eastward, we took to the open desert, which was of loose yellow sand with occasional small detached hills of rock. Camel grass and thorn bushes grew sparsely by the way. After marching all through the night, we camped soon after sunrise in a desolate depression, encircled by low stony hills which shut out every breath of wind. Here we sat or lay throughout the live-long blazing day—half entranced by the shimmering light which poured down upon the arid terrible world. The Malay told his beads with sightless fatalistic gaze. The camel-drivers slept on their bellies beneath a thorn bush—careless of heat or cold, hunger or repletion, night or day—sleeping away some of the hours which separated them from Paradise. The camels chawed at their cuds as they lay with folded legs among the hot stones. The Malay marked his score in his notebook, and lay down to sleep.

Oppressed by the hot silence, I rose up, and slowly picking my way across the stony depression, I mounted to the crest of a little hill. I found a hot breeze blowing, but it was fresher here than down in the dip, and I stood for some moments breathing in the air. Presently I heard a voice behind me, and turning to see who it was, I found Khâlid coming towards me.

"Do not go far away, O Ahmad!" said he, kindly. "There are many robbers in the hills about here."

His sharp, half-shut eye must have watched my movements, and feeling himself responsible for my safety, he had followed me. I had liked this youth from the first, for his readiness to fetch water and kindle fires, and for his cheery amiability. Yet the next night, in Mekka, he parted from me with a stony face and a brief word of farewell, as their custom is, and I never saw him again.

The following day soon after sunrise, we loaded the camels and started again. Chains of low rocky hills now began to appear in all directions, winding over the sandy scrub-covered desert. To the eastward, the peaks of Jebel Kura rose high into the cloudless sky. We marched all through that day, and at sunset we entered a narrow valley called El 'Ugushîya. As darkness fell we continued to thread our silent way among hills of barren rock, which assumed a sinister indefiniteness of form as they gradually merged in the blackness of the moonless night. Low above their crests the stars hung and glittered like jewels.

Onward we travelled, ceaselessly, in the chill night air.

At sunset I had asked Khâlid at what hour we should reach Mekka, and his reply had been "after two hours, in shâ Allah." Now it was past midnight, and still we padded on through the winding sandy valley, which was walled on either hand with grim black hills. Occasionally the Malay would cry "Labbayk, Allahumma, Labbayk!" in diminuendo. Khâlid would bray or warble an unintelligible song of the desert. Still we moved onward in the silent night, seeing nothing but the imminent stars, the indefinite overhanging blackness of the hills, the faint glimmer of the yellow sand beneath us. The dark world seemed un-

real. The Arabs, I thought, must have lost their way. There could not be a great city a few miles ahead of us, in the midst of this deserted desolation. And then, as still we moved onward, unhurriedly but inevitably, the dim sand beneath us seemed to merge in shallow water. I could have sworn that our beasts were pacing through it, while right up to the bases of the black hills the faintly luminous surface of the water extended. Yet the only sound I heard was the "sish, sish" of the camels' padded feet in the sand.

Suddenly a light appeared ahead of us, and at the same moment came the sound of flowing water—pouring down in a heavy stream, as over a waterfall. This sound added to the illusion of the water-flooded valley. But, jumping down now from the back of my camel, I found myself on dry sand. I think the effect of water must have been caused by a slight clinging ground mist.

Continuing on our way, we passed the light, and I saw that it came from a lantern standing on a pillar outside a stone hut, which was evidently a coffee-house. Soon afterwards we came abreast of a well, from which water was being raised by two donkeys harnessed to ropes, which, passing over pulleys attached to a framework above the well, were tied to trough-like leathern buckets which emptied themselves over the parapet of the well into a gutter or aqueduct. About this well stood the dim forms of ithl trees, and a few date palms. We were passing through the narrow valley called Wâdi Et-Tarafâyn.

Presently we went by a ruined stone house, and then past a wall, followed by rush fences, which bordered the stony track.

I remounted my camel, and sat looking eagerly

about me as the animal moved onwards. Another light appeared ahead of us, and then the tall forms of shuttered houses—one of a ghostly whiteness, others dark and vague in the gloom—became detached from the darkness which had obscured them. Then in front of us appeared the figure of a man, seated upon a kursî, and dressed in Bedouin clothes. A rough wooden table stood in front of him, and upon this rested the lantern whose light we had seen. The camel-drivers exchanged salutations with this man as we approached the place where he sat.

"Whence?" asked the Arab briefly.

"From El Lîth," replied Khâlid.

"How many camels?" asked the other.

"Six," replied Khâlid.

And thus, without stopping, we passed into the street called Zugâg Abi Bakr es-Sidîg in the quarter known as Hârat el Misfala.

I was in Mekka.

IX

PRELIMINARY RITES OF THE PILGRIMAGE

DRESSED in the ihrâm, I was shivering with cold: I was half starved and unwashed: I had had very little rest for more than a fortnight . . . but I was filled with a vehement thankfulness as I realised that I was in Mekka at last. Discomfort was forgotten as my camel carried me down the tortuous lane, into the heart of the old Arab city.

The little squat white dome of Hamza's mosque glimmered in the starlight as I passed it on my right hand. The dark branches of a sidr tree overhung a wall to the left. We passed beneath the arch formed by a house which was partly built over the unpaved street. To right and left narrow crooked lanes led away into the silent gloom. The stars shone above the flat house-tops. The uneven dusty lane undulated up and down.

The way we were traversing led into the market street called Sûk es-Saghîr. Presently we turned into the latter, and Khâlid and his companion, stopping their camels, called upon me to dismount, for we were close to Bâb el 'Omra, where was situated the house which I sought. Khâlid then unloaded my saddle-bags, and without another word, the two camel-drivers hit their animals and passed on down the silent street, and the darkness closed behind them. The Malay went with them, as he would dismount further on in the quarter called El Gashâshîya. Khâlid had promised to accompany me to the house of Abdurrahmân the

mutawwif, but the fickle spirit of an Arab may hardly be bound by a promise, and I let him go.

Here was I, dressed in nothing but two towels and a pair of sandals, standing, an hour before dawn, in the main street of Mekka, unknown to, and not knowing, a single soul in the city.

Looking about me, I saw several Mekkans sleeping on kursîs which stood in the street before the shuttered shops. Approaching one of these sleepers, I awoke him by shouting the words "O Muhammad!" into his ear. He quickly woke, and learning that I was a hâjji—"We sow no corn nor durra," say the Mekkans; "the hâjjis are our crops"—he picked up my saddle-bags, and proceeded to lead the way to the house of Abdurrahmân. He called up, in the name of Abdurrahmân, the occupants of several houses, who were in no wise offended by his mistake, but rather did their best to direct us; before finally, entering a little dark passageway near the Bâb el 'Omra gate of the Great Mosque, we heard ourselves answered in the affirmative from the roof of a tall house.

A moment later, one leaf of the heavy double door of the house was thrown open, and on the threshold stood a rather tall full-figured man, dressed in sleeping attire of cotton shirt and drawers. I greeted him with the usual salutation, and having shaken hands, I handed him the note which Shafîg had given me at El Lîth. Then, holding up his little tin lamp, he turned and led the way upstairs. The stairs wound in fours up a narrow square shaft, which reminded me of subterranean dungeons. Opening a door, he led us into a room on the third floor, which measured some fifteen feet by twelve, and whose furniture consisted of carpets and cushions only.

I gave the porter his hire, and he sat down comfortably as though at home, while Abdurrahmân went out to prepare me a cup of coffee. Soon my host returned with three finjâns of coffee, and as we drank he fell to enquiring after my health many times.

"The dawn is near," said he. "As soon as the adân (call to prayer) sounds we will go to the Haram, and after performing the towâf and the saaya you can breakfast and sleep."

He threw up two of the shutters of the unglazed windows; and as we sat on the cushions looking out on the flat starlit roofs of neighbouring houses and the black crests of the hills beyond, there suddenly rose on the air a long-drawn quavering cry—piercing the silence which hung over the sleeping city. The cry was immediately repeated by a number of other voices, which rose and fell and rose again, till the dark blue gloom of the night seemed to be all a-ring with the swelling sounds: "Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar! Ash-hadu ann lâ ilâha ill Allah . . . ."

It was the call to prayer, ringing out in a magnificent volume of sound from the Haram's seven spires in the silence of earliest dawn.

"Let us go down, O Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdurrahmân.

I rose and followed him out to a little closet where I performed ablution, and then we descended the stairs. The porter had preceded us. Passing out of the house, we turned to the left and entered a tunnel-like passage running beneath some houses which adjoin the wall of the Great Mosque. Turning again to the left, after proceeding some six or seven paces, we found ourselves at the head of a flight of stone steps, which led down to a small doorway giving access to the Haram. This

little doorway, which was only large enough to permit the passage of one person at a time, was situated in the south-western wall of the mosque, between the gates called Bâb el 'Omra and Bâb Ibrâhîm.

Saying "bismillah," we stepped across the raised stone threshold, and I stood at last in the Haram of Mekka. Before me, running parallel with the wall, four rows of stone pillars extended to left and right. These pillars were some twenty feet in height, and the majority of them were cylindrical; while others were square or octagonal. They carried pointed arches, supporting a flat roof, which rose in small domes above the square formed by every four columns. From the apex of each little dome hung a long chain, to the end of which was attached a spherical clear-glass bowl. These bowls were ten inches in diameter, and the orifice at the top was about half that measurement. Within some of them smaller glass vessels, containing oil and lighted wicks, were placed. These were the lamps of the Haram. Beneath the arches the ground was paved with roughly-hewn blocks of granite.

Through the forest of columns, I could dimly see the great gravel-strewn quadrangle, over four and a half acres in extent; and in its midst, covered by a black cloth which made it hardly defined in the darkness, stood the Bayt Allah, the House of God—the Kaaba.

Under the arches of the cloisters, bare-footed, long-robed, silent figures were hurrying to take up their positions behind the imâms. In all parts of the great quadrangle, worshippers were forming into long lines facing the Kaaba, preparing to perform the morning prayer. Over the crest of the hill of Abi Cubays, the first faint light of dawn showed in the sky, like a transparent patch in a sheet of dark-blue glass.

"Look!" said Abdurrahmân, "The Sacred House of God!"

I walked forward to the edge of the cloisters, and looked out across the wide court of the Mosque towards the great black-draped cube—that strange building, in the attempt to reach which tens of thousands, perhaps millions, of human beings have prematurely forfeited their lives; and seeing which, unnumbered millions have felt themselves to be on the very threshold of Paradise. It stood, with the simple massive grandeur of a solitary rock in the midst of the ocean—an expressive symbol of the Unity of that God Whose house it is. Aloof and mysterious it seemed, reared up majestically in the centre of the great open quadrangle: while round and round its base the panting hâjjis hurried eagerly, uttering their pitiful supplication—"O God! grant us, in the world, good; and, in the hereafter, good; and save us from the punishment of fire!"

Abdurrahmân now repeated the following supplication, which I said after him:

> "O God, increase the honour and greatness and veneration of this House; and increase the honour and worthiness and righteousness of those performers of the Hajj and the 'Omra who honour and magnify it. O God, Thou art peace; and from Thee is peace. Then cause us to live in peace, O Lord."

Then, repeating "labbayk," "Allah Akbar*!" "Lâ howla wa lâ gûwata illâ Billah il 'Alî-l 'Azîm" (there is no power and no strength but in God, The

* "Allah Akbar" means literally "God is Greater"; that is, Greater than anything else, and therefore Greatest of all.

High, The Tremendous), and other pious ejaculations, we walked across the Mosque; and passing through the arch called Bâb Bani Shayba towards the Kaaba, we took up our position at the end of a row of worshippers behind the Makâm El Hanafî, in order to pray the dawn prayer.

After the conclusion of prayers, we proceeded to perform the towâf el gudûm (the circumambulation of arrival): Advancing to the Kaaba, we passed round to its eastern corner, in which is set the Black Stone. Standing slightly to the left of the Stone, and facing the south-eastern wall of the House—but remaining several yards away from it, so as not to impede the progress of those already performing towâf—we raised our hands before our breasts with the palms upward, and repeated the "declaration of intention"—"I intend to encompass seven times unto Great God, as towâf of arrival. Allah Akbar!" Then, advancing among the stream of devotees, we edged our way towards the Black Stone, Abdurrahmân helping to make way for me. Rubbing the stone with my hands, I made a feint of kissing it, and passed on. In the event of the crowd being too great to allow of a person kissing or touching the stone, he may touch it with the end of a stick, and kiss the stick instead; or he may raise his hands into line with the sides of his face, with the palms towards the stone, and then lower them again, as a salutation. After this we proceeded to encircle the Kaaba, keeping it on our left hand. There are special invocations or supplications to be repeated as the worshipper passes along each side of the House. Let into the southern angle of the Kaaba, called "the Yemen Corner," there is a second stone. Passing this, we stroked the right hand down it without stopping. Some of the more

ignorant hâjjis kiss this stone, but such procedure is pronounced incorrect by the 'ulemâ.

Having completed a single course round the Bayt Allah, we now proceeded to repeat the performance six times, making seven circuits in all; the only difference between these and the first circuit being the omission of the nîya, or "intention." The first three circuits were performed at a very brisk pace, called "ramal"; and the last four at an ordinary walk. During the first three circuits, also, the "ridâ," or upper garment of the ihrâm, is passed beneath the right arm, and the ends folded over the left shoulder—leaving the right arm and shoulder bare. The person performing towâf should be as close to the Kaaba as possible, but in the event of there being a large crowd present, his towâf would be equally correct, however far he might be from the House, provided that he included no other object (such as the well Zemzem or the Makâm Ibrâhîm) within the circuit of his course.

The towâf, which was originally a custom of the pagan Arabs, is supposed to be a very important act of worship, done in imitation of the angels encompassing the Throne of God in Heaven.

Having completed our seven circuits, we proceeded to the rear of a little domed roof supported by iron pillars, called the Makâm Ibrâhîm. This stands opposite to the door of the Kaaba, at a distance of forty-five feet. Here we performed a prayer of two prostrations, as sunnat et-towâf (the "rule for towâf").

We then returned to the Kaaba, and again touched and kissed the Black Stone, saying "Allah Akbar!" three times. Next we stood at the Multazam, which is that part of the north-eastern wall of the Kaaba which stands between the door and the corner in which is the

Black Stone. Standing with our breasts close to the Multazam, and holding our arms outstretched against the black covering, we repeated a further formal supplication; after which the worshipper may make any private petition to God which he may desire.

Proceeding now to the well Zemzem—which is enclosed in a small building near the Makâm Ibrâhîm —I drank a draught of its warm and slightly brackish water; and having repeated the inevitable supplication, we walked to the south-eastern cloisters, and passed out of the Haram through the Bâb es-Safâ. Opposite this gate, there is a house belonging to some of the ashrâf, and to the left of this a small lane leads into the street called El Masâ, or the "place of running." The Masâ commences as a *cul-de-sac* a few yards up the slope of Jebel Abi Cubays, where several broad stone steps lead to a small paved platform which is surmounted by three stone arches. Mounting these steps with Abdurrahmân, I stood at the top, and turning towards the Kaaba (which was hidden from sight within the walls of the Haram) I repeated certain supplications after my guide, beginning as usual with the "intention." Descending the steps, we proceeded at a smart walk along the Masâ, Abdurrahmân all the while saying the ritual, which I repeated after him. The Masâ passes round the south-eastern corner of the Haram; and built into the Mosque wall which overlooks it at this point is a stone pillar. A similar pillar is built into a house called Dâr el 'Abbâs, on the opposite side of the way. These two stones are called El Maylayn el Akhdarayn, and are painted green. Arrived at about six paces from these pillars, the pilgrim breaks into a run, and upon coming abreast of them he again resumes his walking gait, all the while

repeating prayers, until he reaches the further end of the Masâ, which is also a *cul-de-sac*, and is called El Marwa. This point is also in an elevated position, being situated on the lower slope of Jebel Laala. Here, there is another flight of broad steps, leading to a platform somewhat more raised than that of Es-Safâ. Arrived on the steps of El Marwa, we faced in the direction of the Kaaba and made supplication, as at Es-Safâ. This was repeated seven times—four journeys from Es-Safâ to El Marwa, and three return journeys.

The pagan Arabs are said to have set up idols on Es-Safâ and El Marwa, which circumstance is the pre-Islamic origin of the "running." The latter is also said to commemorate Hagar's running about the valley of Mekka in desperate search for water. The Islamic institution of the saaya has its immediate origin in the following passage from chapter *The Cow*:—

> "Verily Es-Safâ and El Marwa are of the signs of God. Whoever, therefore, goes on pilgrimage to the House, or performs the 'Omra, there shall be no sin against him in the compassing of them" (i.e. the compassing of Es-Safâ and El Marwa).

This sounds optional, and looks as though there might be no sin against him if he did *not* compass them; but the saaya has become an absolutely obligatory part of the rites of the pilgrimage, whatever may have been the intention of the passage quoted.

The conclusion of the saaya found us at El Marwa, where several barbers' shops are situated conveniently for cutting the hair of pilgrims immediately after the completion of the "running," as the law ordains.

While the barber clipped a few hairs from my head, I observed the Masâ with interest. It is lined for more

than half its length with little shops, and the part in which these shops are situated is roofed over. This roof extends from El Marwa to the Dâr El 'Abbâs. The street, which is one of the principal markets of the city, was unpaved at the time of which I write. Since my departure from the Hijâz, however, I have heard that the Wahhâbî Sultân has given orders that it is to be paved with stone. During my time in Mekka, it was always several inches deep in dust or mud, according to the season of the year. In dry weather, the crowds which constantly passed to and fro, shopping or performing the saaya, stirred up a thick fog of dust which made breathing extremely uncomfortable.

As I sat in the barber's shop, bands of hâjjis were striding up and down the street with hasty steps. They were chiefly Arabs, but some Indians and Bokhârans were among them. Before each band marched a mutawwif. Some of these were bearded shaykhs, while others were mere youths. With their heads swathed in large yellow turbans; their waists girt with broad sashes of scarlet, of green, or of yellow; their gaudy jackets and fantastic sandals, they presented a dashing, even a gallant sight. Striding past with their heads held high, and throwing frequent quick vivid glances of their dark eyes over either shoulder, in order to see that the drove of bare-headed white-clad hâjjis heard and repeated their words, they intoned the ritual in a loud voice and with beautiful enunciation. Confident as kings they seemed, and, for all the youth of some of them, not unworthy to lead bearded men in the performance of the rites of their religion at the "Centre of the Universe." Full-throated and sonorous were their voices, shaping out every syllable, and deliberately allowing the ends of the words to swell and die away

like rousing notes of music. Many of them, however, mutilate their language when "guiding" non-Arabic-speaking pilgrims. This they do in order to make the repetition of the prayers more easy to the hâjjis.

The mutawwifs are entered to their business when very young. I have seen a small boy of perhaps nine years "guiding" a mob of Bokhârans. One of the brawny hâjjis carried the youngster round the Kaaba on his shoulder, while the little fellow boldly cried out the words of the ritual—the bearded hâjjis repeating them after him.

The hair-cutting over, I lost no time in returning with Abdurrahmân to the house, where I sat down with my guide to eat heartily of beans and samn, followed by a sort of pancake filled with pieces of banana.

The remaining ceremonies of the Hajj are performed on the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Du-l Hijja.

The ceremonies just described are performed by everybody who enters Mekka, unless, like the majority of the Bedouins, he happens to be heedless of the ritual of his religion. A person who has "intended" to perform the 'Omra may now discard the ihrâm, as he has completed that rite, but one who intends to perform the Hajj must continue in the ihrâm until the 10th day of Du-l Hijja.

X

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES ON MEKKA

ALONG the western coast of Arabia, from the Gulf of Akaba in the north to the strait called Bâb el Mandeb in the south, lies a narrow sandy plain varying in width between fifty miles and less than two. This plain is known as the Tihâma. Bordering the Tihâma, to the eastward, is a range of rocky mountains, and this range it is which marks the eastern limits of the plain.

Situated on the coast at, roughly, the half-way point between the Gulf of Akaba and the Strait of Bâb el Mandeb, lies the port of Jidda. Some twenty miles to the eastward of Jidda the lower spurs of the mountain range rise on the coastal plain; and hidden at the distance of a further twenty miles, among winding chains of barren mountains, its people cut off from free intercourse with the rest of the world by the sterile nature of its encircling deserts, lies Mekka. The Muhammedans believe that to enter this city is forbidden by God to all who do not believe in the tenets of the Islamic religion, that is to say, to upwards of four-fifths of mankind.

The valley of Mekka runs from north to south, and that part of it in which lies the main bulk of the city forms a sort of basin, half a mile wide throughout its length. The length of this part of the wâdi is some two miles—that is, from the northern extremity of what is

now the cemetery El Maala to the southern end of El Misfala, by Jebel Umar. At the southern end of a mountain called Jebel Gaygaân, which lies on the western side of the valley, one branch of the wâdi turns at an acute angle in a north-westerly direction, while the main branch suddenly narrows to the width of a quarter of a mile, and continues southward.

The basin of Mekka, two miles long by half a mile broad, is enclosed by high wall-like hills of rock. The names of these hills are:—

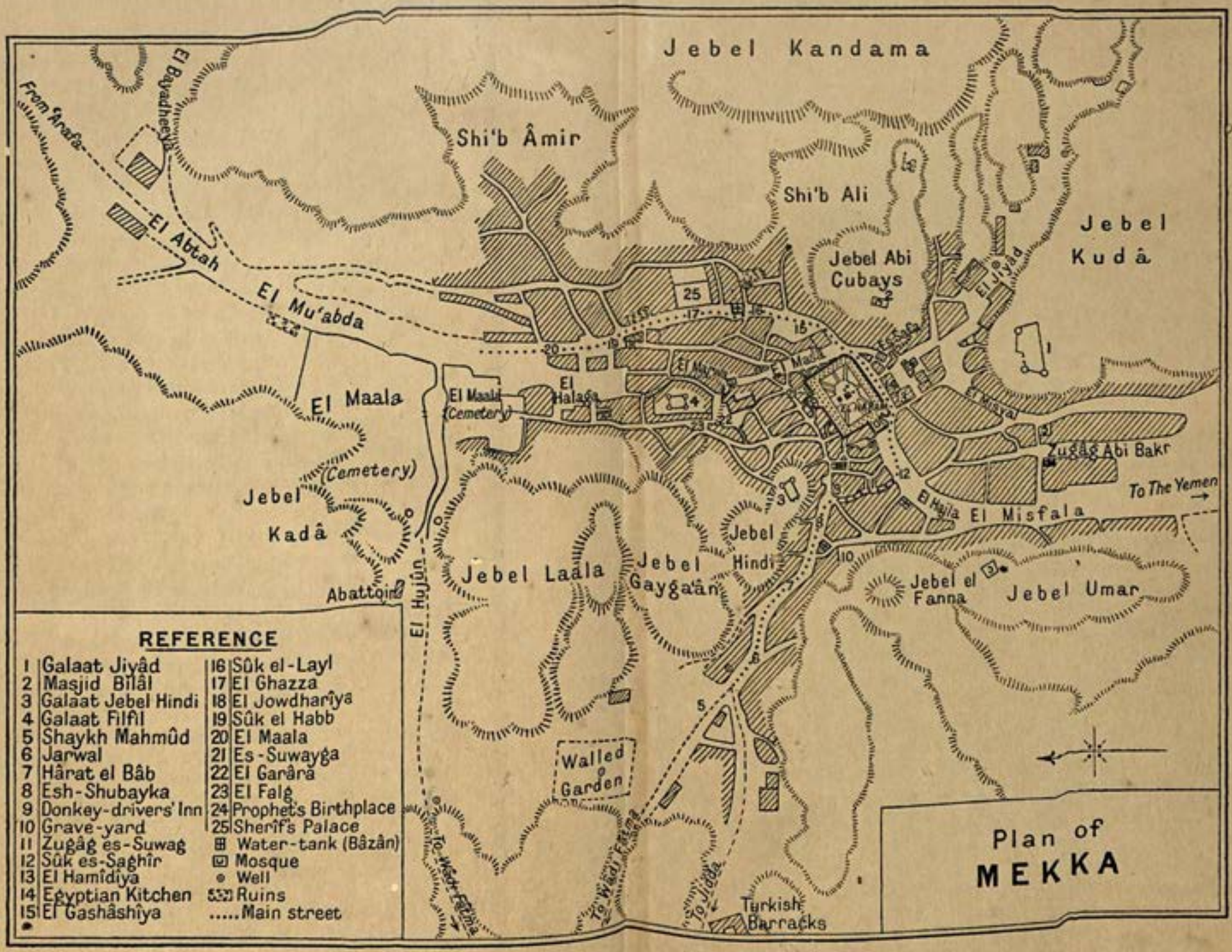
On the north—Jebel Kadâ (1,200 feet).* This mountain borders El Maala on its northern side. On the west—Jebel Laala (800 feet), Jebel Gaygaân (1,000 feet), and Jebel el Fanna (1,000 feet).

Between Jebel Kadâ and Jebel Laala is a small gap called El Hujûn, through which passes a track which joins the El Medîna road beyond Jerwal; and between Jebel Gaygaân and Jebel el Fanna is the gap through which passes the main street of the city—called, at this point, Hârat el Bâb.

On the east—Jebel Kudâ (800 feet), and Jebel Khandama (2,000 feet). Between these two mountains lies the ravine known as Shiab Jiyâd.

Into the centre of the basin which is inclosed by these mountains, protrude four raised points which overlook the city, though they are themselves commanded by the higher mountains which rise behind them. These four points are:

* The heights and distances recorded in this chapter are not laid down as accurate information; they represent the results of rough calculation and guesswork. The figures of mountain altitudes represent the heights from the bottom of the valley of Mekka. Mekka itself is said, by Muhammad Pasha Sâdik, to be 930 feet above sea-level. Accordingly, it is necessary to add that figure to the heights given in this chapter in order to arrive at the altitudes of the mountain-crests above sea-level.



REFERENCE

1	Galaat Jiyâd	16	Sûk el-Layl
2	Masjid Bilâl	17	El Ghazza
3	Galaat Jebel Hindi	18	El Jowdharîya
4	Galaat Filfil	19	Sûk el Habb
5	Shaykh Mahmûd	20	El Maala
6	Jarwal	21	Es-Suwayqa
7	Hârat el Bâb	22	El Garâra
8	Esh-Shubayka	23	El Falq
9	Donkey-drivers' Inn	24	Prophet's Birthplace
10	Grave-yard	25	Sherîf's Palace
11	Zuqâq es-Suwaq	⊞	Water-tank (Bâzân)
12	Sûk es-Saghîr	⊡	Mosque
13	El Hamîdîya	•	Well
14	Egyptian Kitchen		Ruins
15	El Gashâshîya	.....	Main street

1. Jebel Jiyâd (600 feet), at the south-eastern extremity of the valley. On it is mounted a small but strongly constructed fortress, called Galaat Jiyâd, or simply El Galaa.

2. Jebel Abi Cubays (600 feet), which lies five hundred yards north of Jebel Jiyâd, and extends from the eastern mountain-wall into the very centre of the valley, where it overhangs the Haram. On its summit stands conspicuously a small whitened mosque, called Mesjid Bilâl.

3. Jebel Hindi (600 feet), on the western side of the valley, and facing Abi Cubays, but slightly to the northward of it. On its summit stands a two-storeyed barrack, which is dignified with the name of Fort Jebel Hindi. The Haram lies in the hollow of the wâdi-bed, directly between Abi Cubays and Jebel Hindi.

4. Jebel Filfil, or Jebel el Falg (400 feet), at a distance of five hundred yards to the N.N.E. of Jebel Hindi. It is surmounted by a small stone fort, at present in disrepair, called Galaat Filfil.

The valley of Mekka has three outlets. On the north is the ravine called El Muâbda which, bearing to the eastward, leads to 'Arafa, Et-Tâif, and Nejd. On the south is El Misfala, leading to the Wâdi Et-Tarafayn and the Yemen road; and on the south-west is Hârat el Bâb, leading to the Jidda and El Medîna roads.

According to Arab belief, this breathless pit enclosed by walls of rock, knew the tread of a human foot at the very dawn of history. For the Arab historians assert that Adam, at the command of God, rebuilt here the Kaaba, which had already been built by the angels before the creation of man; but had, presumably,

fallen into ruin. Subsequently the Kaaba was rebuilt successively by the sons of Adam, by Abraham, by the Amalekites (who settled in this valley after the arrival of Hagar and Ismayl),* by Bani Jorham, by Kusay ibn Kilâb, and by the tribe of Curaysh, who were assisted in their building activities by a youth of twenty-five years named Muhammad ibn Abdulla, who, fifteen years later, was to assume his mission of prophecy, which changed the whole course of the world's history.

Leaving out of account the mythical tales of Mekka's origin, which the Arab historians have put forward as solid incontrovertible facts, we know from writings of the pre-Islamic Arabs that an idol-house, or temple, stood in the valley of Mekka long before the time of Muhammad. It was the custom of the pagan Arabs to journey on pilgrimage to this spot, where men and women performed the circuit of the Kaaba in a state of complete nudity. At the time of Muhammad's birth, there are said to have been three hundred and sixty† idols in the Kaaba, many of them being, doubtless, mere unscultpured stones. In addition to these, numbers of trees and rocks in the surrounding hills and deserts were worshipped. Christianity had made some progrees in northern and eastern Arabia and in the Yemen, and it is stated by one of the Arab historians, that a stone, sculptured in the likeness of the

* The Muslims believe that when Abraham, at the instance of Sarah, agreed to send Hagar away with Ismayl, he took her to the valley of Mekka, where she discovered the well Zemzem, and continued to dwell. They also believe that Abraham subsequently paid periodical visits to Mekka.

† This number is probably an extravagant Arabic figure of speech, meaning "a great many."

Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus, was included in the Mekkan pantheon.

In the time of Kusay ibn Kilâb (fifth to sixth century A.D.) permanent dwelling-houses were first built in the valley of Mekka, though the majority of the dwellings remained houses or tents of hair-cloth. The Curaysh, after the death of Kusay, improved and enlarged the town, and continued to encourage the pagan pilgrimage.

In the year 570 A.D. Muhammad was born at Mekka. His parents having died during his infancy, he was adopted by his grandfather Abdul Muttalib ibn Hâshim, Chief of the Tribe of Curaysh, and consequently Prince of Mekka. On the death of his grandfather, Muhammad was taken charge of by his uncle, Abu Tâlib, who took him on a journey to Syria. At the age of twenty-five he married a wealthy widow of Mekka, named Khadîja, by whom he had been employed as agent in charge of caravans trading with Syria. At this time he held a very high place in the estimation of his fellows, being known as "The Truthful and Trusty."

In the year 610, being then forty years of age, Muhammad began to receive the revelations which compose the Korân. These revelations, which are supposed to have been inscribed upon "the Preserved Tablet" in Heaven since the beginning of time, were communicated by God to the Angel Gabriel, for transmission to Muhammad. In 622, the Prophet, relentlessly persecuted by the Curaysh who disbelieved in his mission, and with his life in danger, fled to El Medîna, whose inhabitants received him with kindness and accepted his teaching. From the year of this flight the Muslims date the commencement of their calendar—

el hijra meaning "the flight." The number of Muhammad's adherents now increased rapidly, and in 8 A.H. (629 A.D.) he returned triumphantly to Mekka, where he destroyed the idols in the Kaaba and received the submission, or rather the conversion, of the majority of his former enemies.

In the year A.H. 9 the chapter entitled *Repentance* was revealed at El Medîna. This chapter prohibits the entry of unbelievers into Mekka in these words:—"O, you who believe! Verily the polytheists are unclean. Therefore they shall not approach near to the Sacred Mosque after this year."

In A.H. 11 the Prophet died at El Medîna.

Through the thirteen centuries since Muhammad's death, Mekka and El Medîna have waxed and waned. There were years of conquest and glory, when the Arab armies in Syria, Egypt, and Irâk, sent home numerous caravans laden with costly spoils of war. While their spartan simplicity of living remained unaltered the Arabs were invincible. The Arab State was comparable to a desert tribe—the ruler lived as unassumingly and as simply as any of his subjects.

One day in A.H. 15, a messenger, mounted on a fleet camel, came speeding across the desert towards El Medîna. He came from Saad ibn Abi Wagâs, in command of the army in Irâk. Urging his camel over the sandy plain on his way into the city, he was accosted by a shabbily dressed old man who was walking by the wayside.

"Whence come you?" asked the old man.

"From El Irâk," said the messenger without halting.

"Ha! and what is the news, thou servant of God?" asked the old man, stumbling along beside the quickly moving camel.

"God has put the polytheists to rout," said the messenger, and, with the old man panting along on foot beneath him, he rode on into the city, telling him the news as he went.

Then, as they passed in at the gate, the people of the city who walked in the streets began to greet the old man with "Peace be upon you, O Commander of the Faithful!"

"God show you mercy," said the messenger, dismounting quickly. "Would you then not tell me that you are the Commander of the Faithful?"

"Nothing against you, O my brother," said the old man, simply.

It was Umar ibn El Khattâb the Khalîfa, Ruler of Arabia, Syria, Irâk, and Egypt.

Those were heroic days for the Arabs, when an old grey-bearded man, clothed in ancient patched garments, walking bare-footed, and living in a mud-hovel, could send out camel-riders bearing messages to his victorious armies beyond the Euphrates, beyond the Jordan, beyond the Nile—messages containing commands which changed the course of history.

Years of prosperity followed for the inhabitants of the Holy Cities. Under the Umeyyad Khalîfas of Damascas, and the Abbasids of Bagdad, the Islamic State rose to great heights of wealth and power, and much money was lavished upon the Haramayn.

It is probable, however, that Mekka and El Medîna never attained to a greater height of prosperity than in the later years of the Turkish Empire—during the reign of the Sultân Abdul Hamîd. Abdul Hamîd was a wonderful exponent of the power of advertisement, and he saw to it that his public paid for his advertising. The Hijâz railway, from Damascus to El

Medîna, was constructed with funds supplied by every country in the Islamic world. The printing presses of Constantinople worked at high pressure upon the printing of the Korân and books of prayers in many Muhammadan languages; and to this day, from Java to Morocco, it is a Muslim's pride to possess a Stambûli Korân. Pictures of the Holy Places, drawn with such startling perspective that they compelled attention, were strewn about the world, from Algeria to China, from Servia to Sumatra. All this activity aroused great enthusiasm among the Muslimîn, and was the means of enormously increasing the numbers of hâjjis at the annual pilgrimage, and also the numbers of the permanent population of the Holy Cities. There are now in Mekka, and still more noticeably in El Medîna, streets of houses which, as is obvious from the descriptions published by J. L. Burckhardt,* did not exist in the early part of last century. Since the fall of Imperial Turkey, the population of the Holy Cities has again shrunk, and many houses are in ruins.

The Islamic world never reposed any confidence in King Husayn. In spite of his white beard and his piety, he was never able to create that atmosphere of power which emanated from the aloof little schemer of Yildiz. El Husayn was the puppet of unbelievers; not their opponent and diplomatic equal.

Mekka has several times been almost deserted of inhabitants, and the pilgrimage has been completely stopped by wars, sometimes for several years. The Haram, whose very name means "sanctuary," has

* John Lewis Burckhardt, born at Lauzanne in 1784, travelled in the Hejâz in 1814-15. Died at Cairo in 1816: buried without the gate called Bâb en-Nasr. His "Travels in Arabia" was published in London in 1829.

more than once been the scene of bloody strife. As late as 1916, when the Arabs joined the Allies, some of the Sherîfian troops attacked, with rifle-fire, a party of Turks who took refuge in the Great Mosque.

XI

TOPOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF MEKKA

MEKKA, the largest town in the Peninsula of Arabia, although well built for an Eastern city, is far from being beautiful. It is a little old ugly Arab town, bare of ornament, but full of fascination. No splendid domes nor sultân's turrets throw magic charm of fret-work on its skies; yet millions of the Indian race, who delight in fantastic architecture, long for the sight of the unadorned Kaaba and the tortuous lanes which surround it. No sweet relief of green shadowed garden breaks the sterility of its rock-bound confines; yet it is the bourn of the dearest earthly hopes of the dwellers in those floating gardens of enchantment, the islands of the East Indies.

The main street of Mekka may be said to commence at a place called Shaykh Mahmûd, which is situated in that narrow branch of the Mekka valley which turns out of the main wâdi at an acute angle round the base of Jebel Gaygaân. At this point the Jidda road branches westward, from the main road which leads on to the Wâdi Fâtma and El Medîna. Here there is a house with a small orchard enclosed by walls. This was used, in Turkish times, as an agricultural school. From this point the road, which averages twenty yards in width, proceeds south-eastward, and for more than half a mile of its length is known as Jarwal; the lanes leading out of it on either side being also called, collectively, Hârat Jarwal, or the Jarwal Quarter. Like all the

streets of Mekka, those in this quarter are quite unpaved, and Jarwal itself is ankle-deep with loose grey sand. In this quarter dwell poor Bedouins and others, who are engaged in the business of the caravan traffic. They are chiefly of the Harb tribe, and many of them live in tents pitched in their stone-walled camel-yards; while some have rough stone huts. The street of Jarwal is lined with small shops—chiefly grain merchants', chandlers' and coffee-shops—and there are one or two good houses owned by the sharîfs. Beyond Jarwal, the road proceeds round the base of Jebel Gaygaân, in a gradual curve, until it points eastward. This part of the road is known as Hârat el Bâb, and contains a number of good three- and four-storeyed houses, many of them occupied by mutawwifs of the Indians. Beyond Hârat el Bâb, the street takes the name of Esh-Shubayka, and this quarter is well built and thickly populated. Along the main street at this point, are many coffee-shops, together with numbers of other shops of all sorts—fruiterers', chandlers', grain-sellers', bakers', tin-smiths', and so on.

Sending out a narrow side-street, which passes beside the Haram in a north-easterly direction and joins the Masâ near El Marwa, the main street now turns abruptly to the right in a south-easterly direction, and leaving on its left the quarter called Hârat Bâb el 'Omra, passes down a steady incline through the narrow jewellers' street called Zugâg es-Suwag, into a wide market street known as Sûk es-Saghîr. At the top of Zûgag es-Suwag, where the road bifurcates, stands a coffee-house known as Gahwat el Hammâra, the Coffee-house of the Donkey-drivers, and here, within or without the hall of refreshment, according to the position of the sun, a number of fine donkeys are usually

to be found awaiting hire. Esh-Shubayka is inhabited almost exclusively by mutawwifs, chiefly those of the Indians, Javans, Bokhârans and Afghans. On the right of Esh-Shubayka, and hidden from sight by the tall houses of that quarter, lies an old graveyard, which has been disused since the plague of A.H. 1326, when long trenches were dug in it to accommodate some of the thousands of bodies which encumbered the streets and houses of the city.

Sûk es-Saghîr is in the main valley of Mekka, and forms part of the wâdi or watercourse which runs through it. Mekka is probably the only capital, perhaps the only town of any size, in the world whose main street is a watercourse, which every year is several times in flood.

I walked down Zugâg es-Suwag on a dry day in the early part of 1926. The fine dust rose from under my feet as I walked, and the sun was shining as intensely as if it were searching for lurking unbelievers. As I reached the bottom of Zugâg es-Suwag, and was about to turn into Sûk es-Saghîr, I saw before me a swift-flowing river extending the whole breadth (twenty paces) of the market street, and washing against the foundations of the shops. The old city seemed to have taken on a new air of romance with the sudden advent of this swirling stream, flowing down the winding course of the Sûk es-Saghîr and the Misfala. Little stools, mats, reed fans, rags, and many other articles, were floating past on the flood, and small naked boys were wading delightedly in the middle of it, with the water nearly up to their waists. There had been no rain in Mekka for some days; the wâdi had had no water in it for weeks; and even now the sun was shining. Yet this great volume of water was pouring down

from the upper end of the valley (El Maala), and flooding up round the walls of the Haram on its north-eastern and south-eastern sides.

The cause of the flood was a sudden rain-storm, which had burst somewhere on the ranges of Jebel Kura between Mekka and Et-Tâif, which district shelves down to the Wâdi El Yemânîya. This wâdi passes north of Mekka into the Wâdi Fâtma; but at a place called Bir Barûd, some five miles north-east of Mekka, a gap in the mountains allows the flood to overflow into the valley of Mekka. A dam, of roughly hewn stones fixed with cement, has been constructed across the gap, but it is inadequate to the purpose of completely obstructing the passage of the floods into Mekka.

Returning to Sûk es-Saghîr an hour after seeing the flood, I found the watercourse empty, and showing a deep irregular cleft down its centre, which had been cut by the rushing torrent.

Turning to the left down Sûk es-Saghîr, one proceeds in an easterly direction, passing on the way butchers', fruiterers', chandlers', grain-sellers', cotton-cloth sellers', lemonade sellers', and other shops, in great profusion. On the ground, which is rendered soft and comfortable by the deep dust which forms its surface, sit the sellers of halfpenny-worths. Usually their stalls consist of a wooden board placed upon a low stool, but frequently a piece of rush matting or sackcloth spread upon the ground is used. Here may be seen—though dimly, on account of the perpetual fog of dust—slices of mauled melon, battered prickly pears—"prickly figs" the Arabs call them—grimy bowls of sour milk, a mangled tomato or two, together with slabs of yesterday's bread—most of which viands

have already done service in the shops behind before being acquired by the band of light skirmishers sitting in the dust. The latter now tempt the poor passer-by with artful hunger-inducing words, and the eternal cry "halalatayn" (two farthings).

The street narrows sharply as it approaches the southern corner of the Haram, and directly in front rises a fine gateway, with a semi-circular arch, which is approached by ascending several stone steps and immediately descending several more—the steps forming a dam which keeps the floods out of the Haram. This gate is called Bâb Ibrâhîm, not after the Jewish patriarch, but after a tailor who used to ply his trade near by. It is the main south-western gate of the Haram. Still moving eastward, one passes, on the left, a school (El Madressat el Fakhrîya), and then a second gate of the Haram, called Bâb el Widâ, over which is carved an inscription in the Kufic character. Here the street bears to the right a little, in order to clear the southern corner of the Haram. It then becomes broader again, and skirts the south-eastern wall of the Mosque, in which are the gates Bâb Umm Hâni, Bâb 'Ajlân, Bâb Jiyâd, Bâb er-Rahma, Bâb es-Safâ, Bâb el Baghla, and Bâb Bâzân. On the right is the government building El Hamîdîya, the soup-kitchen maintained for the poor by the Egyptian Ministry of Wakfs, a fine house of the Sharîfs, the hill Es-Safâ, and the police headquarters. This part of the main road bears no name as a street, but the first part of it (in which stand the Hamîdîya and the Egyptian soup-kitchen) is counted as part of Hârat el Jiyâd, while the further end belongs to Hârat es-Safâ.

The road now crosses the Masâ, and then bears to the left until its direction is due north. It is here called

El Gashâshîya, and in this quarter, which at present bears a somewhat dilapidated appearance, dwell the majority of the Malay and Javanese mutawwifs; or, as they are designated, the Shayks of the Javans. A few shops, the majority of which supply foodstuffs, are found at intervals along El Gashâshîya; and the principal boys' school of Mekka (Madressat el Falâh) is situated at the point where it joins El Masâ. At a distance of five hundred yards or so beyond this school, the name of the street changes to Sûk el-Layl, which quarter is crowded with coffee-shops and other establishments, including a large potter's shop containing all manner of unglazed earthenware jars, bowls, pots, and water-bottles. To the right lies the district known as Shiab Ali (Ali's Ravine), which is closely packed with mutawwifs' houses of four or five storeys. In this quarter is the Prophet's birthplace, called Mûlid en-Nabi, and here, too, the daily "harâj," or auction-mart of furniture and clothing, is held. Beyond Shiab Ali, on the right-hand side of the way, stands the great palace of the Amîrs of Mekka, built a hundred years ago by Muhammad Ali Pasha, Ruler of Egypt. Here the street takes the name El Ghazza.

Still proceeding northward: on the left is a new palace—well built with the fine dark grey granite of Mekka. This dwelling was built by King Husayn, and is now occupied by Ibn Sa'ûd. On the opposite side of the way, but further along, a narrow lane leads into the quarter known as Shiab Aamir.

A few paces further on, the road converges upon, and joins, the market street known as El Jowdharîya, which, under the name of El Muddaâ for the greater part of its length, extends from the Masâ near El Marwa to this point. This street is sheltered by a

wooden roof, save for the last three hundred yards, and it is the unroofed part which is called El Jowdharîya.

The single street formed by the merging of El Jowdarîya into El Ghazza is called El Maala. At the junction are situated the shops of the principal grain-sellers. There is an open space where the three roads meet, and here the grain caravans put down their loads. This place is sometimes termed Sûk el Habb (the Grain Market). The way is now bordered by a continuous double line of small shops, stocked with all sorts of foodstuffs and household requisites. There are also a number of blacksmiths' shops here. It is called Sûk el Maala. On the left-hand side of the way, immediately before we reach the graveyard of El Maala, is a large open space, about a hundred yards square. This is called El Halaga, and is the venue of the wholesale fruit, vegetable, firewood, and charcoal market. Here, before sunrise each morning, the caravans from Et-Tâif, Wâdi Lîmûn, Wâdi Fâtma, and El Husaynîya, deposit their loads; and the open space is crowded with would-be buyers, gesticulating, shouting, cursing, praying, tasting fruits, breaking sticks of firewood to ascertain whether it is dry, or trying the weight of bags of charcoal.

At the northern end of this market-place, which is surrounded by houses, the city may be said to terminate. Beyond this point, the road widens out to a breadth of thirty yards, and on the right-hand side extends a row of the poorest sort of shops and coffee-houses. Here the donkey market is held, but only the most wretched, under-sized, or superannuated animals ever reach it. Better animals are sold by private treaty. There is a constant demand in Mekka for good donkeys,

and as much as forty pounds is sometimes paid for one. Magnificent beasts the best of them are, of a blue-grey colour, with nearly white legs and belly. They usually have the ends of their tails dyed a bright orange colour with henna, with rings of the same round hock and fetlock.

On the western side of El Maala lies the great cemetery called Garâfat el Maala, or Jannat el Maala. After passing this the road becomes forty yards wide, and is covered with deep coarse sand. This part is called El Muâbda, and here in the early morning the Bedouins come to sell camels, goats, and sheep. Bearing at first to the north-east, and then eastward, the road now passes on through the valley El Abtah, to a point some three miles further, where it bifurcates—the right-hand branch leading to 'Arafa, Jebel Kura, and Et-Tâif; while the left-hand branch leads to Et-Tâif by the route of the Wâdi El Yemânîya.

Returning now to the Sûk el Habb: the right-hand street—El Jowdharîya—is lined with clothiers' and ṣaddlers' shops. The former sell Bedouin hair-cloth cloaks (abaya or mishlah), thawbs, kefîyas, 'agâls (heavy circlets of hair-rope, worn on the head above the kefîya), sandals, and so on. The saddlers' shops are stocked with camel and donkey saddles, halters, saddle-bags of leather or hair-cloth, hair ropes, and other articles of Bedouin saddlery. Further along are the armourers' shops, where rifles, revolvers, swords, and daggers are sold. The favourite weapon of the Hijâzi Bedouins is the rifle. Revolvers are not prized in Arabia. The Nejders prefer the sword to all other weapons, though they carry rifles in addition. Daggers and swords must all be curved: a straight blade is worthless in the eyes of an Arab. I saw several straight

French and Italian sword-bayonets in excellent condition, and was offered them for the equivalent of sixpence each.

Proceeding further, we find the street (which is here called El Muddaâ) covered with a wooden roof, which continues along its whole length to the point where it joins El Masâ. Shops, displaying every household requisite, and all sorts of foodstuffs, line the way; while at the Masâ end, and in the Masâ itself, are the stalls and shops of the principal fruiterers. Here, in July, I found sweet luscious melons, green apples—small but sweet, excellent pomegranates, large pleasant-tasting bananas, water-melons, excellent large blackberries, rather small but sweet figs, prickly pears, limes, and also excellent tomatoes and vegetable-marrows. Later, there were magnificent grapes and peaches. These are the products of the gardens and orchards of Et-Tâif, Wâdi Fâtma, and Wâdi Limûn.

A small street branches out of the left-hand side of El Muddaâ at, roughly, the half-way point between El Jowdharîya and the Masâ. In it are a number of jewellers' shops, and also the "Birthplace of our Lady Fâtma" (the Prophet's daughter). This was the house of Muhammad's first wife, Khadîja. A stone which used to greet the Prophet with "es-salâm 'alaykum" was, until recently, shown to the gaping hâjjis. It projected from the wall of Khadîja's house, but the puritanical Wahhâbîs have obscured it. Near this place also is a soup-kitchen for the poor, known as the Takkîya Sittna Fâtma.

Arrived at the bottom of El Muddaâ, one crosses El Masâ and enters a dark narrow alley, which is completely roofed, and whose floor of beaten earth is kept carefully swept and sprinkled with water. This is the

drapery and perfumery market, and is called Es-Suwayga. It runs parallel to the north-west wall of the Haram, and is separated from it by a closely-built mass of houses divided by several narrow crooked lanes which lead to the several gates of the Mosque. In the Suwayga are displayed silk turban-shawls, calico, carpets, tarbûshes, embroidered waistcoats, strings of prayer-beads, phials of scent, and many similar articles. This is the favourite resort of the hâjjis before the midday prayer, and here may be seen wonder-eyed little Malays, chattering Indians, and unclean Persians jostling against tall Afghans and Turks—all of them looking, fascinated, at the coloured shawls and carpets hanging before the little shops; while the merchants sit calmly behind on the raised floors, which are also the counters, of their establishments. The shops in the Suwayga are merely square holes in the sides of houses, with which they do not communicate. All the merchants have private houses elsewhere.

Half way down the Suwayga, on the right-hand side, is the Sûk el 'Abîd, or Slave Market. This is a very narrow street, the tall houses on either side of which allow very little daylight to filter down to the lower storeys. It is made even more narrow by the presence of long benches of stone, resembling large, high steps, in front of some of the houses. On these benches, at morning and late afternoon, sit the slaves—awaiting purchasers. Passing up this lane one day, accompanied by Abd esh-Shukûr, a cynical grey-headed kinsman of my mutawwif, I found it crowded with Wahhâbîs, who were eyeing the goods critically. The latter sat on the stone benches, as stolid as cows in a field for the most part, though I thought I saw a trace of anxiety in the wistful eyes of one or two of the younger girls as

the scowling Wahhâbîs stared them over. These slaves were mostly Africans, but here and there a light-brown skin marked a native of the Yemen or of Mekka. They were of all ages, from eight or nine years to fifty, and of both sexes. The majority of the men wore no more than a smock—the short thawb of the Mekkan slaves, water-carriers, and pedlars—reaching to a little below the knees, and dyed with indigo. The females were dressed in a similar garment with the addition of cotton trousers beneath it, and a malaya (a large sheet of dark-blue or black material, which is thrown over the head, and completely covers the body including the hands). Upon being requested by a prospective purchaser, or by their owners, to raise their veils, the slave women complied without hesitation. Abd esh-Shukûr told me that jâriyas (slave girls) were then selling at from thirty to eighty pounds each, according to youth, beauty, and efficiency in household duties. The male slaves (*'abd;* plural, *'abîd*) cost somewhat less.

As I was looking, with the uneasy feeling of one who commits an outrage against some natural law, at this strange company of silent sitters, a discreet voice at my ear, murmured—"Would you like to buy an excellent slave girl? I have one in the house—beautiful. Do you wish to see her?"

I turned my head, and found that a lean Mekkan of middle-age, with a careful, courteous face but changeful eyes, was standing behind my right shoulder.

"Would you like to see her?" he said again.

I glanced at Abd esh-Shukûr.

"Is your house near?" he asked the slave-owner.

"Near! Wallah!" said the latter. "Would you like to come?"

"No harm," I replied.

We followed the man into one of the dark houses, and up the stairs to the first floor. Arrived here, he showed us into a dim carpeted room with cushions round the walls.

"Welcome!" he said affably. "Sit!"

We sat down on the carpet, and leant our backs against the cushioned wall, while our host went out of the room. Soon he returned, bearing a tray upon which rested three finjâns of coffee. We each took a finjân, and sipped. Then, rising again, he went to the door and called "O Saadîya!"

A door opened on the floor above, and words passed between our host and a woman. Presently we heard the clatter of slippered feet descending the stairs, and then a woman, shrouded and veiled in white, entered the room, dropping her slippers at the door as she came in.

"Sit, O my daughter!" said the man, and the lady seated herself calmly.

"Uncover thy face, O Saadîya!" said he; whereupon, without hesitation, she raised her veil and threw it back over her head.

I saw a fat round face of a very pale hue, in which lay embedded two coal-black eyes, their edges blackened with kohl. Kohl is a collyrium. It is usually antimony powder. Men use it as well as women. The lady's face wore an expression of boredom and vacuity. The fairness of her complexion caused me to think she might be a Syrian, and possibly half-French or Greek.

"De quel pays êtes vous?" I asked her.

"I do not understand," she said in Arabic, and without any show of interest.

"You are speaking Turkish?" asked her owner.

"Yes," I replied, taking the risk of his knowing Turkish. "I asked her what was her country."

"She is a Mekkan," he replied, "but her father was a Circassian youth belonging to one of the Ashrâf, and her mother was a Yemen slave girl. She knows not Turkish."

We spoke of the poor girl's age, and of this and of that, and finally the man said: "Would you like to see her uncovered—that is to say, uncovered?"

I turned quickly to Abd esh-Shukûr.

"Shaykh Hamza!" I said, in the tone of one who suddenly remembers something of great importance.

Abd esh-Shukûr looked at me without surprise, as his manner was.

"Ay yes," he said, non-committally.

"Our appointment with him is for an hour before noon," I said earnestly. "We must go at once."

"True!" said Abd esh-Shukûr.

We rose: we expressed regret for our sudden departure; we explained the imperative nature of our engagement with the mythical Shayhk Hamza; we hoped to visit our host again at this time to-morrow; we blessed him; we shook his hand; we left him.

Abd esh-Shukûr said no word as we passed out of the slave market and threaded our way down the narrow lane which leads to the mosque gate called Bâb Durayba, but his eyes twinkled as he looked at me.

"An excellent jâriya," I said, "but a person like myself, who is travelling, is better without a woman."

"True!" said the old gentleman. "Better leave her to Shaykh Hamza."

The shops of the Suwayga come to an end near the western angle of the Haram, but the narrow street continues westward, roofless here, until it joins the main street of the city at the Donkey-drivers' Coffee-house in the Shubayka. There is a Turkish bath in this

part of the street, but it is at present disused and falling into ruin. The quarter lying adjacent to Es-Suwayga on its north-western side is known as Esh-Shâmîya.

An important street runs north and south from the wholesale fruit market, El Halaga, to the high ground called El Falg, on which stands the fort Galaat Filfil. This street is known, at the end nearest to El Halaga, as En-Nagâ. Further south it assumes the name Es-Sulaymânîya, and finally becomes El Falg. It is thus named after the quarters through which it passes. The quarter El Falg is much favoured as a place of residence by the Malays. Between El Falg and the Suwayga market lies the quarter called El Garâra, in which stands a large palace of the Sharîfs. Eastward of this is the quarter called Er-Rakûba, which extends as far as El Muddaâ.

Returning now to Sûk es-Saghîr, and proceeding in a south-easterly direction down this street, which lies in the watercourse, or wâdi, of Mekka, one finds that it bears sharply to the left at about three hundred paces from the Haram gate called Bâb Ibrâhîm. Situated at this bend, lies the quarter El Hajla, and here are sold bundles of firewood and twisted ropes (or " crosses ") of dry camel grass, which is used as fodder. This fuel-and-fodder market is known as Sûk el Hajla, and the dealers who carry on business here are mostly poor Africans who collect their material in the hills about Wâdi Et-Tarafayn. A street branches out of El Hajla to the right, and passing through the quarter called El Khandarîsa, joins Harât el Bâb on the north.

The road, after passing El Hajla, proceeds due south, and is known as El Misfala. To the right it is overhung by Jebel Umar, a detached hill some six hundred feet

in height. At its lower end where it enters the Wâdi Et-Tarafayn, it converges with, and ultimately joins, two other roads: one coming from El Jiyâd, and known as El Misyâl (this is also a watercourse); the other coming from Sûk es-Saghîr, at a point nearly opposite the Zugâg es-Suwag, and called Hârat Abi Bakr es-Sidîg.

Eastward of the Haram, and to the south of Jebel Abi Cubays, lies the large ravine called Jiyâd. This was the Turkish residential quarter in the days of the Empire, and it still contains some of the finest houses in Mekka. The most noteworthy of these, though not the best as a dwelling, is the palace of the Sharîfs, called Bayt es-Sâda, which stands at the foot of Jebel Jiyâd, immediately beneath the fortress, with which it is said to communicate by means of a subterranean passage.

The houses of Mekka are well built of a very fine dark-grey granite, which is quarried behind Jebel Umar, and in the upper end of Jiyâd. It is also procured from a hill called Jebel el Kaaba, which lies between Hârat el Bâb and El Khandarîsa, and which supplied the stone with which the Kaaba itself is built. The stone is carried from the quarries on the backs of donkeys.

Formerly it was considered a crime to build houses so high as to overlook the Kaaba, but at the present day most of the houses of Mekka possess that distinction. In the centre of the city they are usually three, four, or five storeys in height, being built so as to accommodate as many hâjjis as possible. The flat roof of every house is bordered with a parapet, six or seven feet in height, constructed of bricks. The bricks of Mekka have a peculiar form. They are about seven inches by four,

and only an inch and a half thick, and are precisely similar to the bricks used in the building of El Fustât in Egypt—the city founded by 'Amr ibn el 'Aas in 640 A.D. Bricks of this form are no longer manufactured in Egypt, but are only found in the old Arab ruins there. It would appear that either the Arabs used bricks of this form in Arabia before they conquered Egypt, or else that the Mekkans imported the idea from Egypt after that event. However that may be, bricks precisely similar to those found in the ruins of El Fustât are manufactured in Mekka at this day. They are made at a place at the lower end of El Misfala where it joins the Wâdi et-Tarafayn.

The floors of the houses are of planks, over which is spread a thick layer of fine sandy earth, which is beaten flat. Rush matting is laid over this, and then carpets. The projecting ornamental woodwork windows, known as mashrabîyas, are seldom seen in Mekka. In their place are wooden shutters, flush with the walls, which slide up and down like railway-carriage windows, and are secured in position by means of iron hooks. Timber is imported from the East Indies and from Burma, and in the newer type of Mekkan houses the whole of the façade of the house is made of wood.

The houses of Mekka, having been built, are very rarely repaired until they begin to fall down. As a consequence of this, the streets in every part of the city have a ruinous appearance. Heaps of refuse lie in every untrodden corner, for the streets of Mekka also act as its dust-bins. A number of boys with donkeys are employed to carry the rubbish in pannier baskets to the outskirts of the city, but their activities do not avail to keep Mekka clean.

In most of the streets there are oil-lamps fixed to the

corners of houses at long intervals. These are lighted at night during the first and last weeks of the lunar month; but when the moon gives sufficient light they are left unlighted. On any but a moonlit night great care must be exercised in groping one's way about the streets of the city to avoid colliding with other pedestrians, or stumbling over sleeping dogs or other obstructions.

XII

'ARAFA

UPON returning to Abdurrahmân's house, after performing the preliminary ceremonies of the Hajj, I breakfasted with my host, and immediately afterwards lay down on a folded lihâf—a thick quilt stuffed with cotton—and went to sleep.

It was some four hours later that I awoke to find a thin bronze-coloured grey-haired man sitting placidly beside me, with his back against the wall-cushions, smoking a cigarette. He was dressed in the Mekkan drawers and gown of cotton, with a bright-red folded shawl about his waist. He wore on his head a yellow turban, and his neck was adorned with a long silver chain, attached to a watch which he carried in the fold of his waistband. He had left his sandals outside the door of the room, as is the custom.

"Take your rest!" said he, as I commenced to sit up. "Take you rest, O Effendi!"

I sat up and held out my hand, which he took in his own, and holding my thumb for a moment, he let it go and kissed his hand.

"Who is your presence?" I asked him.

This form of address he at once treated as a joke, which it undoubtedly is to anybody but an Egyptian or Syrian.

"My presence is a 'youth'* of Abdurrahmân's, and

* Sabi (pronounced Sobbee) is literally "a little boy." The word is used in Mekka to denote a mutawwif's assistant, whether he be ten years old or sixty.

my name is Abd esh-Shukûr," he replied, with a twinkling eye.

This man, in subsequent days, was frequently my companion in my walks about Mekka and its neighbourhood. His knowledge of his native town was not profound, as he could not read, but he was seldom at a loss to supply an answer to a question concerning it. His age was probably a year or two over fifty, and his shoulders were slightly bowed with the weight of those years. His father, an Indian, had settled in Mekka and married an Arab wife, and Abd esh-Shukûr now owned a small house on the slope of Jebel Hindi.

My new friend had never been outside Mekka, excepting to go to Et-Tâif. He had never been to Jidda; he had never been to El Medîna. This is a very common condition among the Mekkans: hundreds of them have never been outside that rock-walled pit, save to go the half-day journey to 'Arafa for the annual pilgrimage.

Abd esh-Shukûr now took a pinch of tobacco from his little tin box, and rolling a cigarette he offered it to me.

"God bless you!" I said, "but I am a Wahhâbî."

"Good!" said he, with a smile. "Then you may smoke in the house as the Mudayyina do, but not in the street. That is to say, the act of drinking smoke is not unlawful. The unlawful is for a man to let people see him drinking smoke. Is that not so? That is to say, the unlawful . . ."

I took the cigarette, and lighted it.

"For the sake of friendship between me and between you," I said.

"Known!" he said, "and we are your servants."

"What happened when the Mudayyina came into Mekka?" I asked him.

"There came four men wearing the ihrâm and riding camels, and they passed down the streets, which were deserted, and cried out the promise of security, and that the people of Mekka—the Neighbours of God—were under the protection of God and of Ibn Sa'ûd. And all of us had locked and barred our doors. And in the second day there came two thousand of the Mudayyina, ihrâmed and carrying rifles and swords, all mounted on deluls. Then they all performed the towâf, and went out again to El Abtah, the place of their camp. After a few days they broke into the palace of Sayyidna (Our Lord, i.e. King Husayn), and tied up a donkey in his sitting-place. And on the donkey's head they put the turban of Sayyidna. After that they drove the donkey, and he wearing the turban, out into the streets, and went round the city with him in front of them. Then they kicked the jewelled Stambûli coat of Sayyidna, and his jewelled state umbrella, into the market-place with their feet, and sold them for five piastres (about sixpence)."

"Did you see this?" I asked him.

"No!" replied Abd esh-Shukûr. "Thus we heard."

At this moment there entered the room a thin and simple-looking youth with a bronze-coloured skin and handsome eyes. He was probably seventeen years of age. Over his white thawb he wore a pink silk jacket, and on his head a yellow turban.

"Es-salâm 'alaykum," he said in greeting, and going to the old man, he kissed the back of his hand and put his forehead to it for a moment.

"This," said the old man, "is my son. His name is Abdul Fattâh," and addressing his son, he added, "this is Hâjj Ahmad Effendi, the guest of Abdurrahmân. It is upon you to serve him well."

"Welcome!" said Abdul Fattâh, his eyes shining with cordiality as he attempted to kiss my hand.

I smiled at the youth (he afterwards became my constant attendant in Abdurrahmân's house), and asked him where he had been when the Wahhâbîs entered Mekka.

"I? I was with the harîm in this house," he said without a blush. "Wallah! I dressed in the clothes of a woman, with a veil over my face, and a malaya. My appearance was like a woman's exactly. If the mudayyina had broken open the door, there was I one of the harîm."

"White upon you,* O Abdul Fattâh!" said Abdurrahmân, who now entered the room.

The portly mutawwif seated himself comfortably, with his back against a cushion; and taking a tobacco box from the fold of his belt, he commenced to roll a cigarette.

It being Friday, the Muslim Sabbath, all my companions wore clean clothes; and now, as we sat talking, the sound of the adân broke in upon us. The minaret of Bâb el 'Omra was only a few feet away from the back of Abdurrahmân's house, and its topmost gallery overlooked part of our roof. Many a time from that minaret in after days the resonant voice of the blind muaddin, Abdul Ghaffâr, or of another, went swelling and echoing over the house-top—waking me before dawn as I lay in the cool silence under the stars.

Having performed ablutions, we all descended to the Haram; and choosing a convenient place under the cloisters, we performed the sunna prayer of two prostrations, and then sat to meditate, repeat parts of

* "White upon thee" may be translated by the colloquialism "good for you!" i.e. "bravo!"

the Korân, or observe the congregation, until the chanting of the igâma, or "beginning" of the congregational prayer.

Prayers being over, many of the congregation proceeded to perform towâf. Among these, I observed a broad figure, over six feet in height, dressed in a yellow mishlah, and carrying a black umbrella as a protection from the sun. He compassed the House with long deliberate strides, and at his heels pressed a motley crowd of Bedouins. This was Abdul Azîz Ibn Sa'ûd, the Bedouin lord of the desert and invader of the Hijâz.

Before we returned to the house, Abdurrahmân introduced me to one Sayyid Hasan, who, he said, was to be my Zemzemi; that is to say, he was the person who would give me a drink of Zemzem water whenever I might want it, particularly at prayer times.

This old man was the hereditary lord of a tiny stone-walled cavern in the wall of the Haram. A small but heavy wooden door a few yards from the Bâb ed-Dâûdîya—through which we usually entered the Haram—gave access to this cave, and here before his cavern door old Hasan was usually to be found at any hour of the day—either chanting the Korân in a low voice, or sleeping in a high one.

He was a short and stocky little man with a thin grey beard. His yellow turban was always immaculate, both as to cleanliness and folding. A man of over sixty years, his face was lined and furrowed in all directions, and his eyes were a trifle dim. He always exhibited an extremely pleasant manner, and delighted to pour out for the hâjjis, not only a draught of Zemzem water, but a copious stream of historical information concerning Mekka. His cavern, some ten feet square, was situated beneath the house of the Chief Judge of

Mekka, which abutted upon the Haram. The Câdi's house possessed windows, above the door of Hasan's cave, which looked into the Mosque from beneath the roof of the cloisters. Within the old man's cavern, the roof of which was arched and little more than seven feet above the ground at its highest point, were two stone tanks, some four feet long by two feet broad and three feet deep. These tanks held Zemzem water. They were situated against the wall at the farther end of the cave, and on either side were stacks of clay water-jars. Several empty tins for dipping water were scattered about on the damp floor, and in one corner was a pile of the little shallow white-metal basins in which Hasan offered the nectar to the thirsting hâjjis. The only means of ventilation in this chamber were the door and two tiny holes in the right-hand wall, which latter admitted a little air from the passage outside Bâb ed-Dâûdîya. The cavern had a musty smell, like that of most water-sodden caves, and was always in semi-darkness.

In this dank place Sayyid Hasan, like some wizard, would dole out the precious water to his assistant, a flat-footed pleasant-faced minion of middle age, name Jaafar. Jaafar, with the water-bottle held on his left hip and a couple of little metal bowls in his right hand, would then issue from the cave, seeking whom he might relieve of thirst.

Only Hasan's personal friends, among whom I was eventually counted, ever dared to set foot over the damp threshold of that dismal but exclusive chamber. A hâjji who exhibited sufficient financial proof of his regard for the old man, however, might even, an he would, bathe himself completely in holy Zemzem water within the cave.

Sayyid Hasan commanded the services of a second assistant. This was a huge black slave, of terrifying shape and size, named Murjayn (Little Coral). This sprite's duties consisted of filling an enormous water-skin at the well Zemzem and bearing it to his master's cave, where he emptied its contents into one or other of the tanks.

The office of "waterer" to the hâjjis is pre-Islamic in origin, and is hereditary. There is nothing to prevent a hâjji from going to the Well itself, where there is usually at least one water-drawer who will pull up a bucketful of water for him. The water coming fresh from the Well, however, is warm, and therefore is less palatable than when it has been cooled. The Zemzemis pour it into their porous jars, where it quickly becomes cool. Each Zemzemi has one or more wooden stands outside the cloisters opposite his cave, in which he places his jars full of water. Nobody is ever forbidden to drink from these, but their owner naturally expects a gratuity from those who can afford to give it. The Zemzemis or their "youths" constantly offer a bowl of their coolest water to better class hâjjis, whenever they see one sitting near. The gratuity is usually given after the conclusion of the Hajj, when the pilgrim is about to depart from Mekka. The mutawwifs often go out on the Jidda road, either on foot or mounted on asses, in order to meet the pilgrim caravans. On these occasions they usually take with them a jar of Zemzem water, from which they offer a drink to any of their own hâjjis who may be in the caravan. Some of them even send the water in girbas to their agents in Jidda for this purpose.

Having drunk a draught of water poured out by the master-hand of Sayyid Hasan, I returned with the muttawwifs to Abdurrahmân's house. Here we were

joined by two of my host's familiar friends. One was a Zemzemi named Sabri. A man of little more than thirty years, he reminded me with peculiar vividness of pictures of King Henry VIII. The other was a mutawwif of Albanians and Turks, named Yûsef, who had on several occasions travelled in the Balkan States, on begging and hâjji-catching tours, in the days of the Turkish Empire. He was a man of perhaps sixty years, but his dark skin was very smooth, and his eyes clear and bright. He told many marvellous tales of his travels, and whenever his grey beard commenced to wag the silence of absorption would fall upon the remainder of our company.

There remained yet three days before the Day of 'Arafa, and during those three days, and part of the day following, I must continue to wear the ihrâm. Fatigued by my journey, I spent most of my time before the Hajj in sleeping. Abdurrahmân or Abdul Fattâh awoke me at each of the five times of prayer; and, accompanied by one or both of these, I would descend to the Haram and perform the prayers and towâf. The pilgrims usually perform towâf in the morning and evening of each day of their stay in Mekka. It is considered one of the highest acts of worship, and the Mekkans frequently perform it. Such occasional towâf, forming no part of the Hajj nor 'Omra, is performed in one's ordinary clothes. Pilgrims, however, entering Mekka under the "intention" of performing Hajj or 'Omra, cannot discard the ihrâm until they have completed the ceremonies of whichever of those rites they have "intended" to perform.

Aburrahmân left me in occupation of the room which I had first entered, on the third floor of his house. This room measured some fifteen feet by twelve,

and was furnished with a carpet and cushions. It was approached from the landing through a two-leaved door, which gave access to a little ante-room of the same length as the main room, but only six feet broad. The floor of the large room was a step higher than that of the ante-room, and another two-leaved door connected the two chambers. On the outer door were painted the numbers "10" and "5." This signified that, in the event of the room being let to Malay pilgrims, no more than ten persons were to be allowed to reside in the large room, and five in the smaller one. Similar numbers are to be observed on the doors of all the rooms in the mutawwifs' houses, having been placed there by order of the government. The authorities found it necessary to make this rule because, according to Abdurrahmân, "Malays die quickly if they are over-crowded."

These two rooms became my private quarters during the following eight months. Excepting at meal times, I could nearly always count upon being left alone if I shut the outer door of this apartment, and thus in Mekka I experienced no difficulty in writing my notes without fear of being observed.

Abdurrahmân, one of the principal mutawwifs of the Palestinians, usually had a thousand hâjjis or more for whom to provide quarters during the pilgrimage season. The Wahhâbî invasion, however, had this year left him without a single hâjji save myself. Mutawwifs with large numbers of hâjjis hire houses in different parts of the city in which to accommodate them. Many of the Malay hâjjis like to lodge near the Haram, and are willing to pay highly for that privilege. Consequently, a man whose house is near the Haram will rent it to a mutawwif of Malays, and accommodate his

own hâjjis in hired houses in a cheaper quarter. Abdurrahmân yearly let his house (with the exception of the top floor and the roof, which he occupied with his family) to a Malay mutawwif for three months. For this he received forty pounds, which was over ten pounds more than the rent which he paid annually for the whole house.

Asleep most of the time, I passed the three days before the Hajj not uncomfortably, save for the wearing of the ihrâm. Meals were served twice daily—soon after sunrise and at mid-afternoon.

One day Abdurrahmân, growing confidential, showed me his death-register—a book which each mutawwif keeps by order of the government. In it are entered the names and addresses of pilgrims who die while in a mutawwif's care, together with a list of the deceased's effects. The latter are handed over to the government to await the claim of the dead person's relatives. Abdurrahmân had had twenty-seven deaths among his thousand hâjjis of the previous year, he smilingly informed me, and on looking down the list I found that nobody among that departed company had left more than a couple of pounds in cash, while most of them appeared to have died in circumstances of complete destitution. This struck me as curious; as, unless they came to Mekka expressly to die there, they would presumably have possessed at least sufficient means to enable them to return to Palestine. Many poor wretches beg their way to Mekka, but such do not lodge with mutawwifs. It is true, however, that many old people, when they feel themselves to be approaching dissolution, go to Mekka in order to die there, and be buried within the sacred limits of the Haram.*

* The word "Haram" may mean the walled Court of the Great

'ARAFA

At last the sun went down on the 8th Du-l Hijja 1343 A.H. (29th June, 1925), and the Day of 'Arafa had arrived. Abdurrahmân had hired a camel with a shugduf for himself and me, and immediately after the sunset prayer the animal was brought into the narrow approach to Bâb El 'Omra, in readiness for us to mount.

The shugduf, or camel-litter, consists of a pair of stretchers, each of which is over five feet in length and two and a half feet broad. These are constructed similarly to the sirîr, or kursî—of a wooden framework strung with plaited fibre cords. A dome-shaped hood of bent sticks, over which the occupant ties his carpet, acts as a protection from the sun. The two stretchers are fastened together, side by side, with ropes; and they rest one on either side of the camel's saddle. Two little baskets, used for holding water-bottles and food, are sewn with string to the hood of each half of the shugduf.

Abdurrahmân, clad in the ihrâm, now mounted with me into the litter. As soon as we had settled ourselves comfortably, the Bedouin in charge of the camel started to lead his animal through the narrow lanes. The shugduf frequently came into violent collision with the walls of the houses, but eventually we reached Sûk es-Saghîr without serious mishap. Passing along by the south-western wall of the Haram, it became

Mosque; or it may mean the whole of Mekka, together with the surrounding territory within the sacred limits. These limits are marked by pairs of stone pillars built beside the roads leading out of the city, at an average distance of fifteen or twenty miles from its centre. "Mekka kulluhâ Haram" say the Mekkans. "Mekka is all Haram." This they say when they hear the adân, but wish to pray in their houses or wherever they happen to be, meaning "Why need we go to the Haram Mosque to pray? Here we are already in the Haram." The limits of the Haram territory of El Medina are less exactly defined.

evident that our camel was lame, and it now began to groan and cry. At that the Bedouin told us to dismount, and having baraked the animal, he readjusted the shugduf. We mounted again and rode a few yards farther. Arrived in El Gashâshîya, however, it became apparent that the wretched camel would, in the course of a mile or so, either shake our shugduf until it fell in pieces from his back, or himself die—perhaps both. In these circumstances we decided to return to the house, and then hire another animal. Vehement discussions and exchanges of repartee between Abdurrahmân, the camel-driver, and members of the crowd proceeding to 'Arafa whose progress we obstructed, enlivened our journey back to Bâb el 'Omra. On arrival at our house, Abdurrahmân told me to go in and sleep, while he scoured the town in search of another camel. I obeyed his instructions implicitly; and just before midnight, my triumphant mutawwif awoke me with the rousing information that he had applied to the government, and with its help had procured the "best camel in Mekka." Again we descended to the street, where, in the fugitive light of the young moon, I saw two camels couched. One of these was certainly a fine animal, a clean and robust-looking Nejdi, which contrasted with our first mount as a hunter to a lame cab-horse.

"Look!" said Abdurrahmân with pride. "The best camel in Mekka. Ashkal jamal . . ." Then he jumped back a couple of paces, for the "best camel in Mekka," displeased with the Bedouin's activities about his saddle, or contemptuous of the praise of one who would presume to ride him, wreathed up his flaggy lip, and bending his snake-like neck round his shoulder, made a vicious grab at the mutawwif's arm. Having missed

his mark, he subsided into his former position, and began to chew his cud with carnivorous growls.

Mounting into the shugduf, we pursued our way down the dark lanes. The camel-driver, Tahsîn by name, rode bare-back on the second camel, in front of us. We passed by the Haram, and proceeded down El Gashâshîya. Numbers of the upper-class Mekkans, on tasselled and caparisoned deluls, went by us at a jerking trot. Small caravans of Moors, Bokhârans, and Indians, riding in shugdufs, passed slowly along the sandy road in the semi-darkness. Numbers of Takârana (sing. Takrûni), and other poor Africans, padded along on foot beneath the camels. Many of the Mekkans rode on asses.

As we came to the outskirts of the city, a strange intentness seemed to fall upon this weird band of travellers. No sound of laughter or of commonplace speech was now heard among them. Even the cries of the camel-drivers to their beasts did not dispel the tense influence which pervaded the midnight scene. The only words spoken by the white-clad hâjjis were pious exclamations and praise to God, and most frequent of these was the "talbiya." It was like a great company of pious white-shrouded ghosts passing along in the silent night beneath the moon.

We passed the graveyard El Maala, and continuing down the wide sandy road El Abtah, we presently came to the place where the road bifurcates before a mountain spur. Proceeding by the right-hand road, we found the sandy soil begin to exhibit outcroppings of rock, and now on either hand the grim black hills closed in upon us, until the road lay in a narrow passage between them. At a short distance further on, the road began to rise sharply as we approached Mina. On the

left-hand side, at the top of the rise, we came to a stone buttress, eight feet high and nearly five feet broad, which is built against the rocky hillside. This object is known as El Jamrat el 'Agaba, or, vulgarly, the Great Devil (Esh-Shaytân el Kibîr). It is one of the three pillars at which the hâjjis throw stones on their return from 'Arafa. A few yards further on, we found ourselves pacing between the two long lines of old dilapidated houses and shops which form the street of Mina (pronounced Minna, sometimes Münna). Here we found signs of commercial activity. The coffee-shops were open and doing a brisk trade, while vendors of dates, bread, prickly pears, and mahallabîya (a kind of blanc-mange), sat at intervals all down the street. The houses of Mina form the strangest collection of little fantastic khans in the world. They are mostly of a single storey, and are raised up from the ground like theatre boxes. Open at back and front, and without shutters, they are simple camping places—stone-built tents. The interiors of some of them are decorated with crude painting in many coloured designs, and the beams of unhewn timber which support the flat roofs are painted a bright red or blue. Wealthy pilgrims hire these dwellings for the three-day period of the annual Mina "season." There are several fine houses at the western end of the street, notably those belonging to the Sayyid Umar As-Sagâf and the Shaykh Esh-Shaybi. As for the shops, they are merely stone cubicles open at the front, their stone-paved floors being but a single step above the level of the sandy road.

At a word from Abdurrahmân, Tahsîn halted his camels before a booth of hair-cloth stretched on poles, beneath which was spread a piece of rush-matting.

THE ROAD between
MEKKA and 'ARAFA
Road .....
Aqueduct
Jer Rahma
'ARAFA
Mesjid Nimra
El 'Alamayn
Ayn Zubayda
El Mazamayn
El Mash'ar el Haram
MUZDALFA
Wâdi-l-Muhassir
Wâdi-n Nâr
Mesjid el Khayf
El Jamrat el Owla
El Jamrat el Wusta
El Jamrat el 'Agaba
MINA
Darb el Miskîn
El Bayâdhîya
Palace
El Abtah
Fort Jiyâd
El Misfala
El Haram
El Mala
Jarwal
MEKKA

Here we sat to refresh ourselves with tea supplied by the owner of the booth. Then mounting again, we proceeded on our way down the village street, in which there stood, at an interval of three or four hundred yards apart, two isolated square stone pillars, seven or eight feet in height. These were El Jamrat el Wusta and El Jamrat el Owlâ, the remaining two "devils" which the pilgrims stone on their return from 'Arafa. At the eastern end of the street are more rows of the tiny stone cubicles which are used as shops during the Hajj, and also a number of stone ovens for baking bread.

After leaving the street of Mina, which is half a mile long, we found the valley widen out to a breadth of a mile. This continues for a distance of rather more than a mile before the hills again close in upon the sandy track, leaving only a narrow ravine called Wâdi-l Muhassir. On the left-hand side of the valley of Mina, immediately before it merges into Wâdi-l Muhassir, lies a ravine, or basin. This is called Wâdi-n-Nâr, and is the site of the Battle of the Elephant. Shortly before the time of Muhammad, Abraha, the Christian king of the Yemen, wishing to make his capital, Sanaa, the religious centre of Arabia (as Mekka was then, under idolatry, as it is now, under Islâm), sent an army to attack the Curaysh and destroy the Kaaba. At the head of this army there marched an elephant, which had been brought from Ethiopia. The Curaysh, feeling themselves unable to cope with the hosts of El Yemen, retired into the hills about Mina and Mekka. When the advancing army reached Wâdi-n-Nâr, however, the elephant, upon which rode Abraha, refused to proceed any further, and thus brought the army to a halt. At this moment a large flock of birds, carrying stones in

their bills and claws, flew over the invading army, upon which they dropped the stones—killing everyone whom they struck. Those who escaped with their lives from this aerial attack, perceiving how unfair a game can be in which everything is fair, fled. This event is commemorated in the Korân—Chapter *The Elephant* —in the following words:

> "Didst thou not see how thy Lord dealt with the Owners of the Elephant? Did He not turn their treachery into [a means of] causing [their] destruction: sending upon them birds in flocks, which pelted them with stones of baked clay. Thus He rendered them as [nothing more than] gnawed corn-stalks."

As we entered the ravine called Wâdi-l Muhassir, the road rose perceptibly; and a mile or more further on the hills again fell away on either hand, leaving an almost circular basin, more than a mile in diameter. This place is called Muzdalfa. Near its eastern extremity is a mosque, and also a bâzân, or stone water-tank, sunk in the ground. This tank is filled from the aqueduct of the spring called 'Ayn Zubayda, which passes near it.

Passing out of the basin of Muzdalfa, the road again enters a narrow rock-walled passage called El Mazamayn, which continues for nearly three miles until it finally debouches into the wide plain of 'Arafât. Half way along El Mazamayn we halted in order to perform the dawn prayer.

For the last hour of our journey the dawn had been slowly lightening the clear sky to eastward, and now, as we left the enclosing walls of the narrow sandy bottom and emerged into the spacious plain, all the

black jagged summits of the hills which fell away on either side of us were suddenly crowned with gold. Before our eyes extended a perfectly level plain, some four miles across from west to east, and nearly twice that distance from north to south. Scrub and thorn bushes, black and dry as though charred by fire, grew sparsely here and there, and on the northern side were several meagre patches of green cultivation clustered about a well. Directly in front of us, in the centre of the opposite mountain wall, as we approached from the west, was a towering conical peak, and a little way in front of this stood a small isolated hill some two hundred feet in height. The latter, which is called Jebel Er-Rahma, is surmounted by a column built of granite blocks, cemented together and whitened. From the summit of the hill the Hajj sermon is preached, and the column is a distinguishing mark to enable travellers to recognise the hill from a distance. The column is five feet square, and between twenty and twenty-five feet high. It stands in the north-western corner of a square stone-paved platform on the top of the hill. This platform measures seven yards by eight, and in the middle of its northern side stands a mihrâb, called the Prophet's Prayer-niche. The platform is raised four feet above a terrace which surrounds it. This terrace is between ten and twelve yards broad, and it communicates with the upper platform by means of a small flight of steps. The annual sermon is preached from the upper platform; and if the season be hot, a rough awning is rigged up with the aid of a number of large nails, which are visible in the stone column at a height of fifteen feet from its base. The platform is edged with a stone coping, one foot in height, and the lower terrace is similarly fortified by a coping eighteen inches high.

The aqueduct of 'Ayn Zubayda, coming from the southward, encircles the base of Jebel Er-Rahma on all sides save the eastern; and passing thence across the plain, northward, it ultimately turns westward along the base of the mountain range until it reaches a ravine somewhat to the southward of the gorge El Mazamayn. Here the aqueduct turns westward, and proceeds direct to Mekka, crossing the pilgrim road subterraneously at two places on its way. Under Jebel Er-Rahma it is carried along the top of a solid stone wall, some nine feet in height, which is built close in to the base of the hill. Part of the top of this wall also acts as a footpath, and is reached from the plain by means of flights of steps, of which there are four. Between 'Arafât and Mekka the aqueduct of Ayn Zubayda runs underground for the greater part of its course.

The platform on the summit of Jebel Er-Rahma is approached by a broad roughly-constructed stairway leading up the southern slope of the hill. This stairway makes first a left-hand turn, and then a right-hand turn, before it ultimately reaches the platform. On the right of the first turn is a little cleared space, called the Praying-place of Adam, being the place where the Angel Gabriel taught the first of mankind his prayers. The sides of the hill are very steep, and are covered with boulders of all sizes and shapes. In view of the fact that there are no boulders on the surrounding plain, this condition of the hill's surface strikes an observer as being rather surprising. In the spaces between the boulders, little enclosures within rough walls of piled stones have been made. Many of these are used as shops on the Day of 'Arafa.

Jebel Er-Rahma, or the Mount of Mercy, is frequently termed Jebel 'Arafa. At its base, it measures

some three hundred yards in length from north-west to south-east, and one hundred and fifty yards from south-west to north-east. The whole region, hill and plain, in which the hâjjis encamp is called 'Arafât, which word is the plural of 'Arafa.

Crossing the plain on our way to Jebel Er-Rahma we came to a water-tank, called bâzân, which is filled from the aqueduct of 'Ayn Zubayda by means of a subsidiary stone channel which runs underground. A little further on we passed between the two wall-like pillars, called El 'Alamayn, which mark the boundary in this direction of the sacred territory of Mekka. From this it will be clear that 'Arafa is outside the limits of the sanctuary.

Tahsîn, instructed by Abdurrahmân, took us to within a couple of hundred yards of the south-western slope of Jebel Er-Rahma, where we dismounted. We then proceeded to pitch a small bell tent which the mutawwif had brought, tied beneath the shŭgduf. Near to us a party of Ashrâf were sitting in a large square tent, and in another were a score of Chinese-looking Bokhârans. Having arranged our baggage, Abdurrahmân and I lost no time in preparing tea and in breaking our fast.

During the morning I ascended the slope of Jebel Er-Rahma, which was crowded with lower-class hâjjis —Africans, Indians, and a few Malays. A number of the sellers of half-pennyworths from Sûk Es-Saghîr were there, selling their unappetising wares; and here and there, among the boulders, were men selling finjâns of coffee or tea, which they boiled with the aid of little fires of brushwood. At the southern foot of the hill was the Hajj market—a cluster of tents where meat bread, vegetables, and other articles of foodstuff were

being sold. Tobacco was also on sale there, and the scowling crowds of gaunt Wahhâbîs, who passed and re-passed, appeared to take no notice of it. During the whole time of my residence in Mekka under the Wahhâbî occupation tobacco was constantly on sale in the shops. It is the smoking of tobacco which is unlawful, not the selling of it!

That was a strange place, and a strange company. Mekkans and Yemenis, Turks and Bokhârans, Malays and Indians, Moors and Shâmis; and this year outnumbering all the rest collectively were the sour-visaged Nejd Ikhwân.*

All wore the ihrâm, save one or two of the pedlars and the Bedouin camel-drivers. I estimated the number of pilgrims assembled on the plain at seventy thousand. This meant that we should perform the Hajj in good company, as in the event of there being less than seven hundred thousand human hâjjis at 'Arafa, that number is completed by the necessary complement of angels. There were probably twenty-five or thirty thousand Wahhâbîs present, most of whom sat out the hours of waiting beside their saddled deluls, far out on the plain to the south-west of Jebel Er-Rahma.

In front of the hill, I observed several large stone water-tanks sunk in the ground. These had been partly filled with water for the use of the pilgrims. The largest of them is called Birkat El 'Ajam and, as its name implies, is intended for the use of the Persians, who are of the Shîa, or schism.

Upon returning to our tent I found, seated with Abdurrahmân, a person clothed in two lurid pink

* Ikhwân means "brethren." "Ikhwân Nejd" signifies "The religious brotherhood of the Wahhâbîs."

Turkish towels. It was the mutawwif Shafîg, whom I had last seen in El Lîth, and who had given me a note of introduction to Abdurrahmân. He greeted me effusively, and told me that he had walked out from Mekka. It appeared that he had reached the Sacred City an hour or so after Abdurrahmân and I had left it.

At midday I went with Shafîg to the Mesjid Nimra,* an old stone mosque on the plain. It is an open quadrangle, some eighty yards square, enclosed within a massive battlemented stone wall, twenty feet in height. At the mihrâb end is a cloister of stone arches, which is six yards in width; and in the centre of the courtyard are three wells in line, over which stands a stone roof with five small domes, which is supported by massive square columns. The wells are supplied with water by a subterranean conduit from the aqueduct. There are five entrances to this mosque, all of which are in the north-eastern wall. No doors are fitted to these openings, and camels and goats use the building all the year with the exception of the Day of the Hajj. On our way back to the tent we passed the burly figure of Ibn Sa'ûd, dressed in a couple of towels and bestriding a beautiful Nejd horse which looked rather like a little animated rocking-horse under his long form. He was attended by four mounted guards carrying rifles.

It is the correct thing to perform total ablution on the Day of 'Arafa, but we forgot about that, as did most of the other hâjjis. Water, however, was abundant and cheap—two piastres for a small girba. Probably this was because the number of pilgrims present was so small. Qutb ed-Dîn, in his history of Mekka, says: "I remember that in the year 930 A.H. water was very scarce, and its price at 'Arafa rose high. I bought a little girba of water, such as a man could

almost carry with two fingers, for a gold dînâr." On one occasion during the reign of King Husayn a similar instance is said to have occurred.

There is no special graveyard at 'Arafa, though many thousands of pilgrims have died there. The dead âre buried where they fall, and possibly a piece of stone is placed upon the shallow grave. The next pilgrimage coming round, the stone will perhaps be taken by somebody in order to build a temporary fireplace, and the place of sepulture, whence, in all probabilty, jackals will have long since dragged the body, will once more assume the semblance of virgin soil. In the course of the afternoon I saw a Yemen pilgrim expire in a sort of epileptic fit near the Hajj market, and I also observed two other bodies being borne to a little distance beyond the tents for burial.

At el 'asr, while a hot simûm wind swept the plain, renewed and general shouts of "labbayk!" broke forth on all sides, and looking towards Jebel Er-Rahma we could see the khatîb, or preacher, seated on his camel on the upper platform, reading the sermon. This sermon is the essential part of the pilgrimage. Unless he "stands" at 'Arafa during the sermon, the Muhammadan cannot claim to have performed the Hajj. As the khatîb proceeded with his preaching, the pilgrims who stood on the hill commenced to wave the ridâ, or upper garment of the ihrâm, above their heads. Each time the preacher cried "labbayk!" in the course of his sermon they increased these activities. This served as a signal to those on the plain, who were too far away to hear the voice of the khatîb. Seeing the waving ihrâms on Jebel Er-Rahma, they too cried "labbayk!" For some time the Bokhârans, and other hâjjis round about us, kept up a continuous chorus of praise and

supplication, not unmixed with weeping; but as sunset approached everybody commenced to strike his tent and prepare his baggage in readiness for departure. The Mekkan sharîfs whose tent was close to ours had six tall black slaves with them, and the work which these pampered individuals had to perform could have been done comfortably by one European servant.

The Hajj sermon consists chiefly of instruction in the rites of pilgrimage, together with very frequent repetitions of the talbiya and supplications to God to protect and strengthen the Muslimîn.

As the sun set, the khatîb wound up his matter; and immediately the hâjjis rushed down the steps of the hill, while simultaneously the whole of the plain came to strenuous life. Many of the dromedary riders —as the Mekkan ashrâf, and the Nejders—had sat their animals during the latter part of the sermon. These now turned, and sped trotting across the plain towards the darkening gorge El Mazamayn. Others were busily mounting into shugdufs, or on donkeys; while all over the wide plain a great fog of dust arose, obscuring the bases of the hills so that their peaks alone were visible—appearing to float like heavy clear-cut clouds in the evening sky. Far out on the northern side of the plain rode the scattered hosts of the Nejd Ikhwân—dim masses of hasting camelry, obscurely seen in the falling dusk. Here and there in the midst of the speeding multitude, a green standard, borne aloft, suddenly flashed out from the dust-cloud, only to disappear the next moment behind the obscuring screen, which rose in spreading billows from beneath the feet of the thousands of trotting deluls.

Mounting into our shugduf, Abdurrahmân and I pushed our way over the plain among the vague

droves of camels, mules, and donkeys. Shafîg, in his rose-pink towels, soon got lost in the crowd, as he had no mount, and we saw him no more until after our arrival at Mina. All about us rose the voices of pilgrims who had lost their companions, crying out names in the dusk as they searched among the hastening throng. Soon we were in the pass of El Mazamayn, and here the crush became more intimate. Occasionally our shugduf would come in contact with another, and for some time it seemed doubtful whether we should be flung to the ground, or ride out the impacts in safety. Most of the Wahhâbîs, all of whom rode dromedaries, had reached the gorge ahead of the other pilgrims and the Mekkans. Some few, however, still continued to come out of the blackness behind us—lurching by at a fast trot on their great upstanding deluls. As we proceeded I noticed several Wahhâbîs, ihrâmed like the rest, returning singly or in twos towards 'Arafa. Riding past at a walk, they scanned the crowd with piercing glances, paying particular attention to the foot travellers who were mixed indiscriminately among the camels and donkeys. These men were on police duty, searching for any sign of theft, or other misdemeanour (such as smoking), among the hurrying crowd. The days of the Pilgrimage form the most prosperous season for Mekka's thieves, but this year few cases of theft occurred, on account of the deterrent influence of the merciless Wahhâbîs. The penalty, in Islamic law, for a first offence of theft is the cutting off of the robber's right hand; for the second offence, of his left foot; for the third, his left hand; for the fourth, his right foot; for further offences he is to be reproved but not executed.

On the following day, at Mina, I saw a wretched

Hijâzi Bedouin come running down the village street. He held his right forearm with his left and only remaining hand. The stump of the other arm was dripping blood, the hand having just been severed. Seeing a cauldron of boiling samm, at which a stall-keeper was cooking kufta (meat balls), the maimed malefactor ran up to it and thrust his forearm into the boiling grease. He held it there for a moment, and then drew it out and went quickly away, just in time to escape the impending blows of the stall-keeper. As he scuffled away, a gruesome object, which was suspended about his neck with a piece of string, swung from side to side. It was his severed hand.

Soon we emerged into the basin of Muzdalfa, and found it full of the couched deluls of the Wahhâbîs, lying, still saddled, all over the sandy valley. Their riders, with the glorious hardihood of the desert, lay sleeping beside them on the ground, without covering save the ihrâm, their rifles and swords under their hands.

At Muzdalfa we stayed until dawn, praying the sunset and 'eshâ prayers, drinking tea, and sleeping. We each gathered seven small stones here, which we washed seven times with water, and then tied in a corner of the ridâ. These were for the purpose of stoning the Great Devil at Mina.

Towards the eastern end of the valley of Muzdalfa, the ground rises somewhat. This rising ground is known as El Mash'ar el Harâm—the Sacred Sign. It is referred to in the Korân, Chapter *The Cow*, in these words:

> "And when you quit 'Arafât, then praise God at the Sacred Sign."

This is the usual interpretation given to the passage, but in view of the fact that in the pre-Islamic "times of ignorance" there existed at Muzdalfa a shrine to the idol Guzah (or Cuzah), which idol was worshipped or propitiated with fire, I am inclined to suggest that the word "mash'ar" (i.e. an object perceived, a sign) should be written "mas'ar" (a place of fire), and for the following reasons:—

Originally, the Korân was written without diacritic points or vowel-signs, and the word which is now written "mash'ar" might at that time have been read equally well as "mas'ar." It is also probable, having regard to the, historically speaking, short memories of the Arabs, and to the lack of precision which they ever display in their mental processes, that the name of the place had undergone this slight change by pure accident, even before the Korân was written. The fact that the Korân was not written with finality until some years after its revelation tends to accommodate such a theory.

In addition to these possibilities, it is not improbable that the name El Mas'ar el Harâm was deliberately changed by the Founder of Islâm so that the Korân might not contain a passage which could be construed as admitting the genuineness, in its day, of the abhorred religion of the fire-worshipping Magians.

The form of the god Guzah is now unknown, but the rainbow is supposed to have been his weapon, and meteors and shooting-stars his arrows. The Arabic name for the rainbow is still "the Bow of Guzah."

El Mash'ar el Harâm is, according to the two Jalâls, "a hill at the end of Muzdalfa." What they mean is a slight rising ground in the basin. Here there stands, at the present time, a raised earthen platform held by

stone walls, on which is built a tall minaret. This erection is known as the Mesjid Muzdalfa. The institution of "spending the night" here, then, is another instance of the incorporation of an idolatrous site into Islâm, clothed with a new religious ritual.

XIII

MINA

ON the first appearance of light over the eastern hills, we performed the dawn prayer. Many of the hâjjis went to the platform of the mosque to pray, while others formed in rows near their camels, and led by one of their number as imâm, performed their prayers where they stood. Abdurrahmân and I joined ourselves to a party of Mekkans who were encamped near us.

Immediately after prayers, we mounted and moved off towards Mina, being frequently banged and bumped on the way through Wâdi Muhassir by the heedless trotting deluls of the Wahhâbîs. Moving on down the valley of Mina, we passed on our right the camping-place of the Egyptian Mahmal—a square walled courtyard containing a small stone pavilion. This year the place was unoccupied, as the Mahmal and its escort did not leave Cairo. Further along on the left was a ruined house of Ghâlib (Sharîf of Mekka 1202-1227 A.H.), and the camping-place of the Syrian Mahmal.

A mahmal (more correctly, mihmal) is literally a "carrier"—a contrivance in which things are carried. The mahmal which is sent annually to Mekka from Cairo is a cubic box-like contrivance, measuring five feet in all three dimensions, constructed of a wooden framework covered with richly embroidered red brocade. This is surmounted by a conical tent-like top, of the same materials, which is some five feet in height.

At the apex of the conical top, and at each upper corner of the box, is a large gilded silver ornament, surmounted by a crescent. The bottom of the mahmal is so constructed as to allow of the contrivance being easily mounted on the saddle of the camel which bears it.

Mahmals similar to the Egyptian, but less magnificent, were formerly sent annually to Mekka by the Sultân of Turkey, with the Damascus caravan; and earlier, by the Caliphs of Bagdad; by the Imâms of the Yemen; by Ibn Rashîd, Prince of Hâil; by the Sultân of Darfûr; and, upon occasion, by the Maharajah of Hyderabad. These mahmals contained presents for the Haramayn, and for their inhabitants, which presents, being the gifts of princes, were naturally borne in magnificent receptacles.

It has been the custom of Islamic princes since the early years of Islâm to send valuable presents for the embellishment of the Kaaba at Mekka, and the tomb of Muhammad at El Medîna. Jewels, gold and silver lamps, incense burners, and other treasures, were sent for this purpose, together with the kiswa, or covering for the Kaaba, and drapings for the Prophet's tomb. They also sent, and still send, large sums of money for distribution among the resident population of the Holy Cities.

It is said that the custom of sending the Egyptian Mahmal to Mekka was instituted in the year 645 A.H. In that year Shajarat ed-Durr, Queen of Egypt, performed the Pilgrimage, using a riding-litter similar in form to the mahmal.

At the present time, the Mahmal serves no purpose save that of a banner or emblem of state. The only object of this description which is still sent annually to

Mekka is the Egyptian Mahmal. A considerable quantity of treasure is carried in the Egyptian caravan, but the mahmal itself remains empty, and is borne on a specially selected camel at the head of the procession. It does not remain in Mekka, but is taken back to Cairo upon the conclusion of the pilgrimage.

Passing on towards the village of Mina, we next came to some little shops, and one of the large water-tanks called bâzân, on the right-hand side of the track; while to our left, close to the base of the encircling mountain, stood the mosque called Mesjid El Khayf. In front of this was the hospital, flying the Nejd flag; and beyond the hospital extended the long lines of little shops and dilapidated houses which border the street of Mina. On our way down the valley we passed by two Indians who were digging a small trench in the stony soil. On the ground near them lay a body wrapped in a white shroud.

Turning off the track, to the left, we selected a place which was fairly clear of stones, near the mosque of El Khayf, and proceeded to pitch our tent. Our Bedouin camel-driver took his beasts and himself away, as we should not want them for the next three days. The ground here was littered in all directions with the bones of animals which had been sacrificed in former years.

We had barely finished pitching the tent when Shafîg appeared in his beautiful pink towels. We now left him in charge of the tent while we went to stone the "Great Devil," which, as has been said, is a piece of wall built against a rock at the Mekka-ward end of the street of Mina. A continuous double stream of the poor mad Wahhâbîs went by us with unnecessary energy on their bouncing deluls as we walked down the sandy road. They came in at a fast trot,

dodging all over the narrow street. The long sleeves of their thawbs and the ends of their abayas flew loosely in the air, and from their saddles long tassels streamed and danced about their camels' knees. Arrived at the devils, they threw their stones without dismounting, and turning, rode wildly back again. Some of these had their women perched behind them on the animal's croup, while a few of the women rode alone, brandishing sticks and thwacking the ribs of their tall deluls, like the men. All these Wahhâbî women were shrouded from head to foot with a single black garment. Into this was sewn a piece of thinner material, also black, at the part which covered the face. This was to enable them to see and breathe to some extent.

We threw our seven stones, saying with each throw —"In the Name of God. God is Greatest. I stone the wretched devil. (Or, 'I stone the company of the devils.') May the Merciful be pleased." Having done this we returned to our tent, purchasing a sheep from a Bedouin on the way.

At this stage in the Pilgrimage, all the little prohibitions against hair-cutting, covering the head, and so on, which the muhrim is obliged to conform to, are removed—excepting the prohibitions against associating with woman and using scent. These last do not become lawful until the pilgrim has completed the Hajj, by performing the Towâf El Ifâdha—the towâf of going away (i.e. from 'Arafa).

Seeing a man near our tent who was slaying the sheep and goats of some of the hâjjis, Abdurrahmân gave him a piastre to despatch my sacrificial lamb also. This he did quite neatly, saying: "In the Name of God. God is Greatest!"—and Abdurrahmân took some of the meat for our dinner, and left the rest to the

poor. We then found a barber, who clipped some hair from our heads, and returning to the tent I shed the ihrâm with intense satisfaction, and put on the gown and turban.

Over against the Mosque of El Khayf, Bedouin butchers were slaying the Sultân's sacrificial cattle, most of which were young camels. Their manner of doing it was to make the animal couch; and then, having thrown it on its side, one of them drew its head back so that the long throat became taut. Another then drew the knife across its windpipe, low down near to the chest. "The flesh of these will be sweet as a chicken," said Abdurrahmân as he watched these operations.

Later, as we sat in the tent, I asked Abdurrahmân to come with me to join the crowd of Bedouins and Mekkans and hâjjis who were streaming from all parts of the valley towards the tent of Ibn Sa'ûd, in order to offer him their congratulations upon the conclusion of the Day of 'Arafa, and the arrival of the Feast of Sacrifices. This proposition he deprecated, saying, "We know nothing of the Mudayyina, nor do we want to know them." Eventually, however, he said he would go with me to the Amîr's tent, and himself remain outside while I entered. Accordingly we made our way to the cope-stoned earthen platform where the tents of the Sharîf of Mekka were formerly pitched at this season. Over the tents which now stood there, flew the green flag of Nejd. Before the entrance of the reception tent stood two black slaves, cloaked and kerchiefed like Bedouins, and armed with Arab swords adorned with massive silver hilts. The visitors streamed into the tent in batches, shook hands with the Sultân, and wishing him a blessed feast, passed out at the

further side. A few of them kissed him on the forehead, the shoulder, or the back of the hand. Abdurrahmân left me at the tent, and I mingled at once with the crowd of callers, and endeavoured to look as though I belonged to a party of Bokhârans who were among them.

Upon entering the tent, I could at first see very little save the jostling crowd. Soon these dispersed to the sides of the tent, or went out of the further exit, and I saw at the opposite end a number of Bedouins and Mekkans sitting upon chairs and benches arranged in a semi-circle around the side of the tent. In the centre of the curve, flanked by three or four of his military amîrs, sat Abdul Azîz Ibn Sa'ûd. He wore no finery, nor carried any weapon. Over a white linen thawb he wore a simple mishlah, or cloak, of yellow hair-cloth, and on his head a red-and-white cotton kefîya, surmounted by a black hair-rope 'agâl, bound with silver wire. His feet were bare, as he had shed his sandals at the edge of the carpet. He sat with an amiable smile on his face, and wearing black spectacles in order to lessen the effect of the sun-glare. He rose to take the hand of each of his visitors in turn, and returning our salutations and congratulations briefly and smilingly, he then immediately turned his attention to the next comer. This lion of many desert battles, and sovereign lord of more than half Arabia, invariably rises to receive his visitors, whether prince or dervish. On this occasion, there being so large a number of visitors, the names were not announced to him.

Ibn Sa'ûd was at that time (July 1925) some forty-five years of age.* Although considerably over six feet

* His information about his own birthday is rather vague. He was born in "the month of Ramadhân in the year before that in

in height, he is well and even gracefully proportioned. The features of his long Arab face are large and strong, the mouth somewhat coarse and thick-lipped, the eyes a trifle on the small side. His beard and moustache—the latter cropped short, the former in length a hand's breadth in the Wahhâbî style—are inclined to sparseness. He speaks remarkably well, in an easy well-modulated tone, and uses slight, graceful gestures of the hands. Like many other people of energy, he is frequently very abrupt with his minions when they make mistakes or get in his way. Abdul Azîz is not himself a religious fanatic, but he is an ambitious statesman; and in the latter capacity he does not scruple to make use of religious fanaticism for the purpose of attaining the objects of his ambition. For years he has made it his business to instil into the simple minds of the illiterate Bedu doctrines which will, at a word from himself, cause them to act with an insane disregard of themselves. His personal ambition is boundless, but is tempered by great discretion and caution. He is a relentless enemy while opposition lasts, but in the hour of victory is one of the most humane Arabs in history.

As for his system of rule—he keeps his own counsel even among his relatives, and essentially his rule is absolute. As an instance of his diplomatic play with democracy, I may mention that in Mekka there is an Advisory Council and also a Municipal Council. Half the members of these are appointed by Ibn Sa'ûd himself, and the remainder are, or were at that time, elected by public ballot. The election being over (and

which the fighting occurred between his uncle Muhammad and Ibn Rashîd." As far as I could gather, this occurred in 1299 A.H., in which case the Sultan was born in Ramadhân 1298.

no elected member would be allowed to take his seat unless Ibn Sa'ûd approved of him), the Sultân proceeds to appoint a chairman who holds the casting vote, and thus brings the number of his own nominated members into the majority. Needless to relate, neither of these bodies can enact any law or by-law, or spend more than a few pounds, without the previous sanction of the Ruler. However, the composition of the Councils being what it is, they seldom vex His Highness by presenting to him measures to which he refuses his sanction.*

This despot is known among his Bedouin subjects as El Imâm (the Leader), as El Amîr (the Commander, or Prince), and as Esh-Shuyûkh (which word is the plural of "shaykh"). Among the Ikhwân, or Brotherhood of the Wahhâbîs, he is usually spoken of as "El Imâm," by which they mean "Leader of all the Muslims who are worthy of the name." These intolerant puritans have never recognised any Khalîfa† save the

* Since my departure from Mekka even this degree of democracy has been annulled, and Ibn Sa'ûd or his deputy appoints every member of the Councils, and every government servant. The absolute rule of one reasonably strong and just man is quite the most suitable (if not the only possible) for the towns of the Hijâz, whose population is composed of more than a score of differing racial elements devoid of public spirit. The best ambitions of this population are directed, as they most worthily may be, towards life beyond the grave, while their immediate worldly ambitions are concerned with little else than money-grubbing, sensual indulgence, and tawdry display. There is little between these two aspects of their characters.

† The Khalîfa (or Caliph) is God's vice-regent on earth, the successor in leadership to the Prophet, the commander of all the Muhammadans in the world. He must be an independent sovereign prince, of religious life, and one who rules according to the precepts of the Sharî'a or Islamic Law. The failure of the later Sultans of the House of Othmân to conform to the latter condition (by their adoption of the Napoleonic Code) would have

ruling member of the House of Sa'ûd. The Sultâns of Turkey were looked upon by them as the leaders of schism.

The foreign minions of Ibn Sa'ûd—Syrians, Egyptians and Irâkis—speak of him as the "Sultân," or at present as "El Malik" (the King). They usually preface the latter title with the word "Jalâla"—Jalâlat el Malik, His Majesty the King. I recall that these same minions have often in my presence spoken scornfully of ex-King Husayn for arrogating to himself the title of Jalâlat el Malik. On such occasions they have asserted that Ibn Sa'ûd would never take such a title, because all greatness (jalâla) belongs to God alone; and because the word "malik" implies possession, and the possession of all things belongs to God alone. "El mulk Lillah wahdah" i.e. "Possession (or kingship) belongs to God alone." That was in the days when we sat uncertainly in Mekka, while Jidda and El Medîna still resisted the Wahhâbî invasion.

The Mekkans, with the exception of such as desire to court his favour, speak of the Sultân briefly as "Es-Sa'ûdi" (i.e. he of the house of Sa'ûd).

Foreign hâjjis usually speak of him as "Ibn Sa'ûd."

In addition to the above forms of title, the Sultân is frequently referred to simply as "Abdul Azîz," but his Levantine minions, coming of races which have evolved flowery forms of address of their own—forms which are neither Arabic nor European—always prefer more formal styles. Kings and emperors are unknown in the patriarchal communities of the Semites, and the true Semitic form of address to an exalted personage is

disqualified them from holding the position of Khalîfa, were it not for the fact that, as in the West so in the East, might frequently transcends right.

simply "master" or "chief" (in Arabic "sayyid"). It was thus that the followers of Jesus Christ addressed their Leader.

In the afternoon we hired donkeys and went into Mekka, where we performed the Towâf el Ifâdha. Meeting Sabri and Yûsef in the quarter of Bâb el 'Omra, we persuaded them to come out and join us at Mina, where the pilgrims are obliged to remain encamped for three days. It is allowed to the pilgrim to leave Mina during the daytime, but at night he must be there. These three days are termed Iyyâm et-Tashrîq, i.e. the Days of Flesh-drying, because the pilgrims then dry the flesh of their slaughtered beasts as a provision for their homeward journey. Sabri and Yûsef, having no hâjjis to "guide" this year, had not been at 'Arafa for the Hajj. They promised to walk out to Mina in the cool of the evening, and join us.

The Mekkans say that it is considered disgraceful among them for any man to remain in the city during the Pilgrimage; but one rather gathers that in the event of there being no prospect of financial advantage in going to 'Arafa it is not then considered so reprehensible to stay away.

Until quite recently a curious custom prevailed among the women of Mekka. During the period when the hâjjis were encamped at Mina, the women left alone in their houses in the deserted city would dress in male attire, with turbans on their heads and sticks or daggers in their hands, and after dark would issue forth in companies of from four or five to a score. Thus dressed and armed, and without their veils, they would patrol the silent lanes of the deserted city, singing a rhymed song which is too obscene to be set down here. If they met any man in the course of their rambles,

they would yell their song at him, and all of them hammer him the while with their sticks or their hands. This pretty custom was abolished by order of King Husayn.

We found the Kaaba clothed in its new covering (kiswa). The beautiful silk and wool kiswa with its gold-embroidered band (which is an annual present from Egypt) not having been sent this year, Ibn Sa'ûd had supplied a covering of black Bedouin hair-cloth from El Hasa. Upon this was sewn the tarnished gold band belonging to last year's kiswa.

Having rested, I rode out again with Abdurrahmân to Mina at the hour of el 'asr. Arrived there we found the blood and bones of slaughtered animals strewn about all over the valley, wherever the hâjjis were encamped. On the steep hillside above Mesjid El Khayf a number of Yemeni pilgrims had taken up their quarters among the rocks. Coming from a mountainous country they cannot bear to swelter out the three days of Flesh-drying in the bottom of the valley, but climbing up the nearly perpendicular slopes of the enclosing mountains they soon feel in their native element.

Numbers of hawkers went among the tents selling fruits, sour milk, bread, and other delicacies. Water-sellers with little donkeys, each laden with two small swollen water-skins, also went the rounds.

At each of the five hours of prayer, a small cannon was discharged five times near the tents of the Sultân. At sunset, after stoning (in company with Abdurrahmân) all three of the devils, I went with Shafîg to the mosque of El Khayf. This building is very similar in form to the Mesjid Nimra at 'Arafa. It differs from it in that El Khayf has two minarets, while Nimra has no minaret at all. In the centre of the open quadrangle

is a small dome which covers the spot where the Prophet used to pray. Beside this stands the smaller minaret; the larger one surmounts the gateway, which is in the northern wall. We found the place crowded with hâjjis, who walked or sat about in the walled quadrangle, apparently unaware of its grim secret; for beneath the ground at the western end of this mosque, as Abdurrahmân told me on a later day, lie several great vaults. In the years when the plague strikes Mekka these vaults are opened, and thousands of bodies are stacked in them—"like those your books," said Abdurrahmân, pointing to a pile of books stacked on the floor of my room. He himself had helped to "stack" the poor wretches who perished in the plague of 1326 A.H.

The mosque El Khayf is kept closed all the year except during the Feast of Sacrifices.

In the evening came Sabri and Yûsef, bringing with them a lanky young man named Hasan, who possessed a very pleasant manner and an enquiring mind.

The prospering moon of the eleventh night rose above the black wall which shut in the valley. Against the dark hillside rose the white minarets of the mosque. Our carpets were spread on the sand, and here we sat sipping tea in the cool breeze. The tent stood behind us, flapping gently. About us on all sides were tents of the Mekkans, Bokhârans, and Indians.

I asked Abdurrahmân: "Do the people of Mekka ever come to Mina save in the Hajj?"

"Yes!" he replied. "We sometimes hire one of the houses in Mina, and come here for an excursion of two or three days or a week. But we never come alone, unless it be to pass through by day. At night no man may stay here alone—unless there be with him a party of his friends."

"Why, O my uncle?" I asked.

"Because of the devils (shayâtîn). There are many devils," he replied darkly.

"Devils!" I said. "How do you know that?"

"Wallah, devils!" he replied, waxing earnest. "You may sit after dark in the houses of Mina, with your tea-pot and finjâns before you, like we are in this moment, and suddenly—ouf!—the lamp will be extinguished and the tea-pot will vanish—gone!—vanished!"

"The tea-pot vanish!" I cried. "Allah Akbar! And after that?"

"After that," said Abdurrahmân with intensity, "you may go down to the door, if you are not afraid, and out into the lane—and there find your tea-pot on the ground, undamaged."

"Billah, tell me!" I said. "Have you ever known one who dared to go down in that darkness and seek for the tea-pot?"

"Go down in the darkness!" echoed Abdurrahmân in horror. "I take refuge in God from Satan the Stoned! But the tea-pot was found there in the morning."

Shafîg, Sabri, and Yûsef, looked calmly on in the moonlight. Hasan, with wide eyes, seemed to experience a child's half-fearful fascination for the unknown. Whenever the devils were mentioned they murmured "I take refuge in God."

"And then," I said, "what do you do when the tea-pot disappears?"

"We all say 'I take refuge in God from Satan the Stoned,' and after that we talk among ourselves in a loud voice in order to keep away the devils, until we are tired. Then we put down our heads, and draw our coverings over them and go to sleep," said Abdurrahmân.

"Have you seen the tea-pot disappear?" I asked.

"Yes, by God! Seen it with my eye!" he replied. "Many people have seen it. Ask Amm Yûsef!"

I looked towards Uncle Yûsef.

"Ay, wallah!" said he, with his grey beard a-wag, "also, if you come to Mina riding upon an ass, God honour you!* and you tie him up for the night in the lane, you may hear his voice braying from the roof as you sit in the first floor drinking tea."

"Amazing!" exclaimed Hasan.

"True! Wallah, true!" said Sabri.

"And then?" I asked, "does one of you go down into the lane to see if the donkey is there, tied up?"

"No!—never!" said the company, half in scorn, half in horror.

"I heard not of one going down. Never!" said Amm Yûsef. "We went up onto the roof to see if the donkey was in the place from which his voice came. That is known."

"Known!" I repeated.

"Known!" murmured the others.

"In truth," said Sabri, his Henry-the-Eighth visage as grave as that of a judge, "in truth, when you hear the donkey's voice coming from the roof, he is there—on top of the roof. But he is mad, and you would not be able to get him down. He is invisible, because of the workings of the devils. You cannot see him. The best thing is to leave him—Not so, Amm Yûsef?—and you go to sleep. The devils will get him down before

* When a Mekkan, addressing another, mentions any animal, he usually adds some such remark as "God honour you." Many of them also do this when they mention a woman. The reason is that when a person is addressing honourable male company he should mention members of the lower classes of creation with diffidence.

the morning, but he will never again be the same donkey."

"Never!" said Amm Yûsef. "Wallah, madness! madness from the devils."

"Have you seen donkeys of this sort?" I asked.

"Seen them with my eye," said Uncle Yûsef. "You hire one from the donkey-drivers, and see for yourself! And mount upon his back if you are able."

I looked for the gleam of a smile in the old man's eye, but there was nothing there save stern conviction.

"And so," I said, "you do not come to Mina at night?"

"Not at night, alone. Never! Save in a company," said Shafîg, "it is a place heavy on one's heart—save in the Hajj."

"Yes!" I said, "and except in the Hajj, it is bare of people—like a dead place; and for miles the ground is strewn with the bones of slaughtered animals. There must have been millions sacrificed here!"

"Animals!" exclaimed Amm Sabri, "*and men!* How many hâjjis lie buried in every part of Mina! By God, *men!* Leave the animals!"

"Ay, wallah, many hâjjis!" said the company softly.

At this they fell to musing; and sitting there beneath the stars I seemed to see the countless shrouded pilgrims who had preceded me in yesterday's thirteen hundred years. Uprisen now, the ghosts of those hâjjis went pressing by. "Labbayk Allahumma! Labbayk!" they cried: "Here am I, O God! At Thy command!" Then out on the road to 'Arafa: out along that narrow track, walled closely on either hand by overhanging crags of trackless rock—home of the carrion vulture, and of bestial half-human apes: on they go, with no shudder of fear at the forbidding strangeness of the

scene; pressing onward in the moonlight, with words of praise to God on their lips. It seems that they are on the very road to Paradise. One, exhausted, falls, shudders, and dies. Another, with foaming mouth, drops among the feet of the onward moving camels, and, with contorted limbs, shrieks still: "At Thy command, O God! Here am I!" Here a poor wretch, straying a little apart from the crowded track, falls with a robber's knife in his heart, and while the heedless crowds pass on, his poor purse is torn from his neck, and his lifeless body is left to the jackals and vultures.

By God, *men!* Leave the animals!

Suddenly all over the dark valley, faintly tinkling with the tiny sounds of human activities and human voices, there rose the long-drawn chanting of the adân. It was the hour of el 'eshâ. Near to where we sat a Bokhâran began to chant—making havoc of the Arabic words.

"Low Ilowhow ilow low," he cried (for "Lâ ilâha ill Ollawh"—There is no god but The God).

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Amm Shafîg, with a pitying grin. "That one is of the people of Bokhâra."

I softly imitated the words of that stolid voice, which seemed to flash into reality the scene, obscure till now, of Gutayba bin Muslim and his Arab hordes fighting their way into the city of Bokhâra in 88 A.H.

Thus, with talk and tea-drinking, the first part of the night passed away, until one by one growing tired, we lay down, and drawing our coverings close about our heads we slept in the silent valley.

We remained two more days at Mina, and on each day we threw seven stones at each of the three Jamras, or Satans. Each of these objects is surrounded by a low circular parapet, which forms a receptable into which

the stones fall. After the completion of the Hajj, these stones are gathered up and carried on donkeys to Mekka, where they are strewn like gravel upon the ground within the Haram. It is said that the fanatical wild men of the desert sometimes discharge their guns at the "devils" and yell curses at them, but personally I did not observe any such excesses.

The ceremony of the "stoning" at Mina is supposed to commemorate the circumstances of Abraham's meeting with the devil in this valley on his return from a pilgrimage to 'Arafa. God had commanded the patriarch to sacrifice his son Ismayl (not Isaac, as is recorded in the Book of Genesis). He therefore took him and prepared to obey the command, but in that moment Satan appeared and whispered to him not to carry out his intention. Upon which Abraham, acting upon the suggestion of the angel Gabriel, took up stones and threw them at the devil, in order to drive him away. This occurred at the spot where at present stands El Jamrat el Owla. Then the devil left Abraham, and approaching Hagar, the mother of Ismayl, he endeavoured to enlist her aid in preventing the patriarch from performing the bloody deed. But she also took up stones with which she drove him away. This encounter occurred on the site of El Jamrat el Wustâ. Finally, the devil approached Ismayl himself with similar suggestions, but he, turning upon his tempter at the place where El Jamrat el 'Agaba now stands, also drove him away with stones, and put him finally to rout. A small mosque, known as the Mosque of the Ram, stands on the northern side of the valley of Mina. At this spot Abraham sacrificed the ram as a substitute for Ismayl.

These legends are said to have been current among

the pagan Arabs, who worshipped a number of idols in the valley of Mina, and stoned the devils there, as the Muslims do to this day. The Muhammadan 'ulemâ affirm that the stoning is intended as a symbol, by the performance of which the pilgrim may strengthen his contempt for the devil and all his works.

The Arabs seem to enjoy expressing their hatred of an abstract idea by stoning a material object. When Abraha invaded the Hijâz and fought the Battle of the Elephant, he was guided by one called Abi Righâl, a Mekkan. His grave is situated near Et-Tâif, and to this day the passing Arabs throw stones at it, in detestation of Abi Righâl's treachery. A little beyond Jarwal, on the road which leads to the Shuhadâ, lies the grave of Abi Lahab, an uncle of the Prophet, and one of his most relentless and bitter persecutors. His name, translated, means "Father of Flames." His grave has received the vindictive missiles of the Arabs for the last thirteen centuries. The Father of Flames has the distinction of forming the sole subject of a Korânic chapter. It is entitled *Abu Lahab*:—

> "Let the hands of Abu Lahab perish, and let him perish. His wealth shall not profit him, nor that which he hath gained. He shall suffer the heat of flaming fire. And his wife, bearing firewood, a rope of fibre upon her neck."

Another grave, near the Shuhadâ, which is stoned, is that of Abi Juhayna, who, as Amîr of Mekka, made himself and his memory everlastingly unpopular by reason of his oppressive rule.

Many other cases might be cited, and the traveller in Arabia frequently observes piles of small stones in the desert, denoting sites of stoning.

Among the Semites capital punishment has frequently taken the form of stoning since the earliest times, and in Islamic law it remains the penalty for adultery to this day. "Advanced" Muhammadan states, such as Turkey and Egypt, which have adopted European codes of law, no longer enforce the Sharî'á or religious law, but in Arabia a person convicted of adultery would be put to death in this manner. The offence mentioned is extremely difficult to prove in Islamic law, however, as there must be four witnesses of the act. The capital penalty applies to married men. Unmarried youths receive one hundred stripes of the stick, and an injunction to seek early marriage.

During the last two days of the Flesh-drying, the sickening odour of the decaying remnants of slaughtered beasts made us long to get away to a more wholesome spot.

Soon after midday on the 12th Du-l Hijja, we loaded our camel, which had been led in by its owner during the night, and proceeded on foot by its side down the street of Mina, in order to stone the devils for the last time. This duty having been completed, we mounted into the shugduf. All my companions, save Abdurrahmân, had gone into Mekka on foot before dawn. The Wahhâbîs were in great force, filling the whole of the rock-bound road. Above the horde flew their noble standards—some green, others red—surmounted by shining gilded points, and bearing in white letters the great and simple dogma—"There is no god but The God."

All was of the East. The little stone houses, a few of them with mashrabîya casements; little shops open to the wind and the sun; no wheeled cart; no glazed window; no machines. Nothing but men of the East,

and camels, and donkeys, and little shops where primitive, unmanufactured products were sold. In distance I was perhaps fifty miles from the outskirts of modern civilisation, but in time I was separated by a thousand years.

At a little distance beyond Mina there is a narrow track which branches to the left from the main road, and, winding behind a hill, passes through the suburb called El Bayâdhîya and rejoins the main road at El Abtah. This track is called Darb el Miskîn—the Poor Man's Road, because it is seldom used by other than pedestrians.

In El Abtah we passed the residence of Ibn Sa'ûd, over which flew the Nejd flag. It is a well-built and spacious mansion, with a walled garden behind it. It belongs to Sayyid Umar As-Sagâf, a wealthy merchant domiciled in Singapore.

Cheerful laughter and greetings rang out on all sides of us from among the crowd of returning pilgrims—happy and care-free now at having safely completed the Hajj.

Passing by El Maala and on through El Gashâshîya, we came into Sûk Es-Saghîr, and a few moments later we dismounted before the Bâb el 'Omra. We were met on the stairs of Abdurrahmân's house by the youth Abdul Fattâh, who hastened to prepare "that which is obligatory," which, in the present instance, took the form of coffee and cigarettes.

XIV

THE MEKKAN'S DAILY LIFE

I NOW informed Abdurrahmân that I proposed to await the termination of the siege of El Medîna in order that I might visit the Prophet's tomb.

There is a divergence of opinion among the Muhammadan jurists as to whether it is better for the hâjji to leave Mekka immediately upon the conclusion of the rites of pilgrimage, or to remain for a space in the Holy City. Every book on Muslim religious practice contains several pages on this subject.

The four orthodox imâms or leaders in matters of law, are Abu Hanîfa, Esh-Shâfi'i, Mâlik, and Ibn Hanbal. These four, being well versed in the Korân and in the Traditions of the Prophet, drew up separate systems of jurisprudence. The four systems do not vary in any fundamental point of belief nor religious duty, and they are, after all is said, no more than "counsel's opinion." The law itself is to be found in the Korân and the Traditions.

The respective followers of the Four Imâms do not constitute, in any sense of the word, separate sects. They believe in the same dogmas, pray in the same mosques, and obey the same laws. Even in the Haram of Mekka, where there is a separate prayer-station for each of the four schools, the Muslims say their prayers in any part of the Mosque in which they happen to find themselves at prayer-time, without discriminating between the imâms who lead them. The only exception

to this is the case of the Wahhâbîs, who always pray behind their own imâm of the Hanbalî school. Their reason for refusing to mix with other Muslims, in prayer or in social intercourse, is not that they disapprove of the systems of the other three Imâms, but that they disapprove of the modern followers of those systems, whom they accuse of introducing into the religion extraneous customs and superstitions which, they say, prove them to be polytheists. The act of asking the spirit of Muhammad, and of those of other prophets and saints, to intercede with God in their favour is extremely prevalent among the Egyptians and Syrians, and the Wahhâbîs say that this practice is equivalent to associating Muhammad, or another as the case may be, with God, on an equality. By them it is also asserted that the erection of domes over tombs is a sign that the relatives and friends of the buried person consider that he is as important as God, and must therefore have a mosque built over his grave so that his followers may pray *to him* there. To live in a magnificent house, to dress well, or, in fact, to possess anything which is not found in the desert, is a sign, in the eyes of the ignorant Wahhâbîs, that the owner of such appanages worships not God but Mammon, which is "kufr," i.e. unbelief; or that he worships both God *and* Mammon, which is "shirk," i.e. the associating of other things with God.

The Wahhâbîs are, in fact, puritans. They follow Islâm as Muhammad preached it—almost. While I was in Mekka a meeting was held between the chief 'ulemâ of the four schools, and unanimous agreement was reached on all the matters which were supposed to have been in dispute between the Wahhâbîs and the remainder of the Islamic world. In every instance the

verdict of the conference agreed with Wahhâbî practice. The only point in which the Nejders do not follow the Prophet is in their hatred of nearly all modern Muslims save their own community. On account of this one matter it may be truly said that the Wahhâbîs do constitute a new sect. Ibn Sa'ûd and his diplomatic minions would have it that the Ikhwân do not hate other Muslims, with the exception of individuals whom they have seen performing practices contrary to Islâm; but those who know the Ikhwân are aware that they are far too ignorant to be able to discriminate, even if they wished to do so. Because of their attitude towards other members of their religion they form a separate sect. If one party of men cry "God is One," and they meet another party, different in speech, in dress, and in manners, to themselves, but whose members also cry "God is One," then the two parties, being somewhat fanatical, as most deeply religious people are at heart, may do one of two things. The first of these is that they may disregard the differences of customs, of speech, and of dress, and join fraternally in the united cry of "God is One." That was Muhammad's way. The second is that each may loathe the other and, if they be strong, shun them; or if they be weak, annihilate them. That is the way of the ignorant Wahhâbîs, and most of the Wahhâbîs are ignorant.

A Muslim who contravenes the Sunna—the Prophet's example, is no longer a Sunni or orthodox Muhammadan. He becomes a Shî'i or schismatic. Many orthodox Muslims look upon the Wahhâbîs as being of the latter class, and were it not for the qualities of personal power, of statesmanship, and of public-spirited justice displayed by Abdul Azîz, the whole of the Muslim world would still detest the Wahhâbîs,

as they have been detested, until recently, ever since their movement was started by the Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhâb in 1142 A.H. (1729 A.D.).

The Four Imâms differ in such trifling matters as whether it be lawful for a man, after having touched the hand of his wife, to say his prayers without first performing fresh ablutions. The Imâm Esh-Shâfi'i says this is unlawful, while the Imâm Mâlik says it is lawful. All the four are agreed upon the point that one who touches a woman not his wife, nor a relative in the nearest degree of consanguinity, must not say his prayers until he has purified himself by means of fresh ablution. This is one instance among hundreds.

Similarly, in the matter of residence at Mekka: Abu Hanîfa dislikes sojourn in the Holy City, fearing that the sanctity of the Bayt Allah will become as of no account in the eyes of one who beholds it constantly. Familiarity will breed indifference until "veneration will leave his heart completely, and the House of God will become, in his inattentive sight, as the generality of houses."

This was the view held by Umar Ibn El Khattâb, the second Khalîfa, of whom the Mekkan historian Qutb ed-Dîn writes:—

> "Umar (may God be pleased with him) used to go round among the hâjjis after the performance of the rites and say—'O People of the Yemen! to your Yemen! O People of Syria! to your Syria! O People of El Irâk! to your Irâk! For verily that [i.e. departure] best makes for the continuance in your hearts of the sanctity of your Lord's House."

On the other hand, it was the practice of some of the later Amîrs of Mekka to prohibit the departure of the

hâjjis for a week or two after the Pilgrimage. This they did in order that the pilgrims might spend their money in the Holy City and thus benefit its inhabitants.

The Imâm Esh-Shâfi'i and the Imâm Ahmad ibn Hanbal both approve of residence at Mekka. They support their opinion by the Prophet's words—"Whoever patiently abides for one hour in Mekka, the fire (of Jehannam) shall be put from him for a period of a hundred years."

It is believed that the reward for good deeds performed in Mekka will be double that awarded for good deeds done elsewhere. Also, it is said that the saints constantly visit the Holy City. The pilgrim hopes that it may be his happy fate to see and converse with one of these.

Qutb ed-Dîn writes:—

> "There is no doubt about the coming and going of the saints to her [i.e. Mekka] on the auspicious occasions. And anybody who sees one of them, or is seen by one of them, has attained the greatest happiness. It is said that they attend the Friday prayer-gathering and the honoured occasions, and perform the Hajj every year."

The Muslim saints are credited with possessing strange powers. Some of them, called Ahl el Khatwa —the People of the Footstep—can travel hundreds of miles in a moment of time. Instances are recorded in Arabic history of pious men who were seen praying in the mosque of Bani 'Umayya in Damascus, or in that of 'Amr ibn El 'Aas in Fustât, in the same hour in which they were known to have been present in Mekka. By this it was known that they were wâlis, or saints, as only saints can be in two places practically at once.

Wâlis cannot readily be recognised as such by ordinary mortals, and many of them can perform miracles. A true wâli is never ostentatiously pious. He is of humble appearance, does good by stealth, and is scrupulously punctual in all his religious duties. He exudes virtue, and it is a great blessing to a Muslim to associate with a wâli, or even to speak to him, or sit near him. So say the Muslims.

The knowledge that wâlis are not easily to be distinguished is one of the reasons why Muslims, excepting those of the lowest class, and those whose European training has reasoned all the faith and poetry out of them, are so polite and gentle to strangers of their faith. The stranger may be a wâli. No man knows.

Qutb ed-Dîn proceeds:—

"It was the custom of my father (God show him mercy), before he became blind, to hasten to Mekka on the Day of Sacrifice, after stoning El Jamrat el 'Agaba, and there to sit, facing God's House, looking attentively about him. He remained sitting there till the sunset prayer. After the sunset prayer he would perform the towâf and the saaya, and return to Mina.

"He used to say—'Verily God's saints must of necessity perform the Hajj every year, and do that which is most excellent, namely, perform the Towâf of Visitation on the first day of Sacrifice. Therefore I hasten to go down from Mina on that day, and sit within the Hataym* all day, observing the people performing towâf, in hope that my glance will fall upon one of them [i.e. the saints], or his

* The Hataym is a short semi-circular wall adjacent to the Kaaba. It is described in the next chapter.

glance fall upon me, and thereby result in my receiving his blessing.'

"He continued this until he became blind. [When that affliction befel him] we used to take him and seat him in the Hataym, for he used to say—'Though I see them not, yet it may be that their glance will fall upon me, and their blessing result to me.'

"This he continued until he died (God show him mercy).

"Verily God's wâlis hide themselves from men's eyes, so that no one sees them save he whom God has made happy."

No Muslim will deny that the Haram of Mekka is the most "honourable" place on earth, nor that a great blessing accrues to him who dwells there, and a greater still to him who dies there.

The daily routine of a Mekkan is in this wise:—

He is usually awakened, an hour and a half before daylight, by the muaddins chanting the adân from the minarets of the Haram. Only the very religious rise at this hour. These, leaving their mattresses, which are spread on the roofs of their houses, descend to a little stone closet on the floor below, in order to perform their primitive morning toilet. This consists of throwing cold water over themselves, or of merely performing the wudhû—ablution of the face, hands, and feet. A tooth-stick (miswâk) is also used. This is cut from the root of a shrub called arâk, which grows in some abundance in the Wâdi Honayn near 'Arafa. The end of this stick having been frayed so that its fibres are separated, similarly to the bristles of a small paint-brush, the teeth are rubbed with it. The sap of the

plant possesses cleansing qualities, and the miswâk very efficiently serves its purpose. Teeth-cleaning is performed before each prayer as a part of the ceremonial ablution.

The mutawwifs very seldom rise in time for morning prayers in the Mosque. Abdurrahmân managed to do this scarcely a dozen times during the whole period of my stay in his house. On several of those occasions he rose in order to pilot me in the towâf. For my own reasons I took an early opportunity to tell him that I had memorised the towâf prayers, and that consequently he need not "guide" me any longer. His expression was one of relief as he heard this announcement. "Praise to God!" said he. In the pilgrimage season, however, the mutawwifs are obliged to rise before dawn in order to attend to their hâjjis.

Having performed his ablutions, the Mekkan puts on his thawb and waist-sash and turban, over the linen trousers and shirt in which he has slept. The upper classes wear a cloth robe over the thawb, and many of the sharîfs wear the Bedouin mishlah.

In most parts of the Muslim world, notably in India, Egypt, and Syria, many contravene the law against wearing silk and gold. In Egypt the 'ulemâ wear more silk than do the members of any other class. In Mekka, I myself frequently wore a silken shawl as a girdle, and this went quite unremarked among the motley population, many of whom wore similar girdles. Some of the Mekkans wear silk turbans, and even jackets of the same material. I was always careful to wear no silk whatsoever whenever I visited Ibn Sa'ûd or any other Wahhâbî. Both gold and silk may be used for embellishing copies of the Korân, but gilt texts, silken drapings, and in fact, any ornaments whatsoever are

disliked* in a mosque, save the plainest Korânic texts. Beautifully written or embellished texts are apt to distract the mind from the spiritual significance of the words to the excellence of the workmanship. In spite of this, however, there are mosques as magnificently adorned as the most highly decorated Christian churches. The only exception allowed by puritans is in favour of the Kaaba. It shows the fundamental reverence and discernment of the Muslims, that the Kaaba, nevertheless, remained, even in the days of their greatest power and glory, a structure of plain blocks of hewn stone, arranged according to the simplest architectural plan which the mind can conceive.

Descending to the street, the Mekkan makes his way to the Haram, taking off his sandals before entering. Here he joins a row of worshippers, and with them performs the dawn prayer.

After prayers he usually performs the tôwâf, and then returns to his house. In the meantime his wife or his slave will have been brewing the morning coffee. While drinking a finjân or two of this beverage, he smokes a cigarette. Rising again, after the coffee, he will fetch his turban-shawl, and putting on his sandals, descend to the Sûk es-Saghîr or the Sûk el-Layl in order to buy some bread, and a bowl of beans cooked in samn, for his breakfast. Sometimes he purchases eggs, to be fried in samn by the women, or a kind of sweet pastry called fatîra. Many of the housewives cook the pastry themselves, and also bake their own bread. After eating, the Mekkan takes a draught of water, followed by several little glasses of sweetened tea.

* Makrûh, i.e. not strictly against the Law, but somewhat reprehensible, nevertheless.

Breakfast concluded, he sits smoking for half an hour or an hour, and discusses domestic matters with his women. He may then go to the sûk, in order to purchase the day's provision of meat and vegetables. He keeps in the house a supply of all the less perishable articles, such as wheat, rice, samn, coffee, charcoal, firewood, and so on. His women grind the flour and mix the dough for making the bread. At some time during the day he will send his son or his slave with the unbaked loaves to an oven-owner (sâhib forn), who will bake them for him.

After returning from the market, the Mekkan sweeps out his mag'od or sitting-place, which is usually a small room on the ground floor, or is a raised platform at one side of the entrance hall. The mag'od in Abdurraḥmân's house was a room, six feet wide by fifteen feet long, raised in the manner of a theatre-box, five feet above the beaten earth floor of one side of the entrance hall. The floor of the mag'od was of wooden beams covered with earth, beaten hard. The room was furnished with an unglazed window—there is practically no glass in Mekka—protected by iron bars, which looked into the narrow lane in which the house stood. The inside partition of the mag'od was also formed of a succession of iron bars, surmounting a wooden panelling some eighteen inches high. The space beneath the mag'od, which was also enclosed by a partition, was used as an occasional stall for donkeys, and a perpetual receptacle for rubbish.

The sewerage system of Mekka is primitive. A large and deep hole is dug in the street before the house, and the refuse conduit is led to it. The hole is then covered over with beams and planks of timber, over which a layer of earth is spread. When it becomes full of filth,

certain poor scavengers are hired to open the hole and empty it. They scoop up the refuse and place it in pannier baskets on the backs of donkeys. They then drive out beyond the Haram limits in order to empty the baskets.

Having swept his mag'od, and rearranged the cushions with which it was furnished, Aburrahmân would pour fresh water into a shîsha which stood in the room. He did not smoke the shîsha himself, but kept it for his friends.

Having made these preparations, he would sit down to roll a cigarette, and to await the arrival of his cronies. Presently these would enter the door, singly or in couples, and climb the half a dozen steps which led up to the mag'od. Amm Shafîg, whose house faced ours on the opposite side of the lane, would usually drop in first, followed by Sabri, who lived two doors further down, Amm Yûsef from Sûk es-Saghîr, Hasan from Hârat el Bâb, Abd esh-Shukûr from Jebel Hindi, and others. Sometimes the meeting would be held in the house of another, but among his own coterie Abdurrahmân's house was usually the meeting place. Here they sat talking and smoking, drinking water, and (on occasional days), tea, until the adân was heard calling to the midday prayer.

Frequently Abdurrahmân went to Sûk el-Layl, in order to attend the daily sale of carpets and other household articles which was held there. This mart was known as "el Harâj." Thence the merchants would send out dallâls, or criers, who carried the articles which it was desired to sell by auction. Passing quickly through the lanes and markets, these running brokers would display their wares to anybody who beckoned to them, and inform him of the amount of

the highest bid so far received for each article. Should a prospective purchaser bid higher, the dallâl must remember him and the amount of his offer, until he in turn is outbidden by somebody else. Finally, the dallâl returns to his employer and tells him of the best bid he has received; or, if he has been given a reserve price by the merchant, he will sell without again referring to his principal.

Anything is sold in this way. I have seen dallâls riding about the town on horses and donkeys which they were endeavouring to sell, and others running along with silk scarves, daggers and carpets. The best of the slave girls are also given into the hands of dallâls. They do not carry these poor creatures round with them, but they secure prospective customers whom they conduct to the houses of the girls' owners, where they may be inspected. There are dallâls who specialise in this branch of the business, and who know a number of people who are always prepared to bid for a girl who may strike them as being a desirable addition to their harîms. During my time in Mekka it was an understood thing among these dallâls that the first person to whom any girl of youth and beauty, who came into the market, was to be offered, was Ibn Sa'ûd. They looked upon this as a standing order. Presumably, the Sultân was at that time engaged in forming a new harîm, having left most of his own women behind in his former capital, Er-Riâdh.

At this time, the failure of the Hajj as a paying proposition, by reason of the war, had reduced to comparative poverty many Mekkans who had formerly been fairly wealthy. The consequence of this was that many valuable Oriental carpets, and much other property, were put up for sale and disposed of at a

fraction of their true value. It would have been quite possible, at that time, to have purchased, for a hundred pounds or so, an assortment of beautiful Persian carpets, which, in Europe, could have been sold for quite a thousand pounds.

Upon Abdurrahmân's return from the Harâj, he would sit in the mag'od and relate to whomsoever might be present the wonderful bargains which were waiting to be picked up in Sûk el-Làyl.

Sometimes, though rarely, the cronies would go to the Haram to perform the midday prayer. More usually they broke up their gathering at the sound of the adân, and retired to their own houses. If they happened to sit a few moments longer over an argument they would remain where they were until after prayers, for anybody seen in the street while prayers were in progress in the Mosque was liable to be soundly beaten with sticks by Ibn Sa'ûd's black slaves.

Some of the Mekkans never prayed in the Haram, excepting only at sunset, unless they happened to find themselves there at the moment at which the call to prayer sounded. At the sunset prayer-time nearly every man in Mekka was present in the Haram, and without the Mosque walls the city was deserted.

One of the reasons why the Mekkans did not worship in the Haram more was their hatred of the Wahâhbîs, whom they accused of altering the form of the service.

There is a difference of opinion among the Four Imâms as to whether it is compulsory to pray in congregation. Ibn Hanbal (who is followed by the Wahhabîs) says that it is compulsory. The other three imâms allow that prayers said in private have some value. All four are agreed that prayers said in congre-

gation are the more efficacious. The above remarks apply to "fardh" prayers—the five daily performances of compulsory prayer.

After midday the Mekkan ascends to his private quarters and rests, or talks with his women, until the hour of el 'asr. This is the dinner hour. In our house, Abdul Fattâh would bring a great brass tray down to my room, where we dined, together with any guest who might have been invited. The tray was placed upon a small wooden stool, about a foot in height, and upon this the dishes were set. Dinner consists of a large dish of boiled rice, sometimes mixed with lentils, over which samn is poured; a dish of stewed sheep's or goat's flesh, with a few added tomatoes and onions; and a dish of vegetables—either vegetable marrow, cut into small cubes; spinach; mulûkîya, a species of mallow; badinjân—the black-skinned fruit of the egg plant; or bâmia—a thin tapering leguminous pod. The last is of a pale green colour, and is some three inches long, and three-fifths of an inch thick at its base. Each diner is provided with a disc-shaped loaf of bread, which is hollow or pouch-like. Saying "bismillah," he breaks off pieces of this, and with their aid scoops up meat, gravy, or vegetable—using his right hand only. Metal spoons are provided with which to eat the rice. Taking a little gravy, or vegetable, or meat in his spoon, the diner mixes it into the rice at his side of the dish and eats, renewing the supply of gravy or vegetable from time to time. The Mekkans like to finish simultaneously with those who eat in their company, and then, saying "el hamdu Lillah!" they drink a copious draught of water from a metal cup, which is filled from the porous clay shirba. Frequently the shirbas are perfumed with the smoke of burning sandal-

wood or incense. After drinking, each goes outside the room to the bathing-place, where he washes his hands and mouth with soap and water, pouring the latter from a small clay jar, called ibrîg, which has a spout similar to that of a tea-pot.

After the ablutions, Abdul Fattâh would bring down from the upper floor a brass samovar, together with a tea-pot and finjâns, and two receptacles containing tea and sugar respectively. Cigarettes are rolled, and smoked with the tea, and the members of the gathering pray independently the prayer of el 'asr between the refilling of the finjâns, or on the completion of the tea-drinking.

Here they sit talking until, perhaps, an hour before sunset, when suddenly a voice is heard, in the lane below, of another crony calling Abdurrahmân to descend. This is the signal for everybody to swathe his turban-cloth about his head, and rise. The Mekkans usually unwind their turbans when sitting in their houses, and sit with nothing on their heads save the linen skull-cap.

Everybody assumes his cloth jubba, or else a short thin jacket, and then they go downstairs in order to join the new arrival. In the cold weather the company will now sit again in the mag'od until the sunset prayer, when they go to the Haram, and again upon their return until near midnight. In the hot season they will frequently go to one of the coffee-houses in the outskirts of the city, instead of going to the Haram. Usually they went through Sûk es-Saghîr and the Misfala, exchanging greetings right and left with acquaintances as they went, to a coffee-house at Birkat Mâjid. Here there is a small patch of cultivation—durra and birsîm, with a few palm, sidr, and ithl trees. This

cultivation is only some quarter of a mile long by a hundred and fifty yards wide, but here in the hollow, among towering masses of rock, the sweet greenery gave to the eye a feeling of refreshment. There is a large water-tank here, some seventy feet long by sixty feet broad. This receives the surplus water from 'Ayn Zubayda. It is less than half a mile outside Mekka, beyond the extremity of the Misfala.

Here the rocky hillside had been dug into the form of rough terraces, upon which stood benches and small wooden tables. Entering the coffee-yard, Abdurrahmân and his companions mount to the topmost terrace, and seat themselves in the airiest position. The coffee-house keeper brings a little tin coffee-pot full of coffee, and a handful of finjâns. One by one he half fills the latter with the beverage, handing them round to the sitters. A shîsha could be hired here for a farthing or so, and Amm Yûsef regularly handed out his pinch of dry tobacco to the coffee-server, who then prepared the pipe for him. A clay water-bottle was placed upon the table, together with a small tin can which served as a drinking-cup.

At sunset, everybody having performed ablutions, all the customers, together with the coffee-server and his assistant, assembled in a special place spread with reed-matting, on the lower terrace, and repeated prayers.

After this they sit talking in the cool evening air, the sky above them ablaze with stars. Thus it was on the occasion of my first visit to Birka with them, and this is how the evening proceeded:—

"O Tahsîn!" called Abdurrahmân to the coffee-server. "Bring your hand!"

Tahsîn, grimy but smiling, falls up the rough steps

from the lower terrace, and receives from Abdurrahmân a little paper packet of tea, which has been purchased on the way down Sûk es-Saghîr. Presently he returns with a tea-pot and finjâns, all of which he places upon the table. Abdurrahmân produces a paper packet of sugar, which he empties into the tea-pot.

Talk has died down for a moment. Out of the shadows to westward a breeze comes across the valley, stirring the lote, palm, and tamarisk trees. My gaze falls on young Hasan's face. He is watching the low-hanging moon. A nice youth, Hasan—cordial and kind. Amm Yûsef and Amm Shafîg are bubbling their shîshas and emitting slow streams of smoke from their mouths —contemplatively. Amm Abdurrahmân rolls a cigarette with care. Sabri hums a tune, no louder than the wind. Suddenly Hasan speaks.

"Which is the brighter," he says to me; "your moon in Damascus, or this our moon?"

Everybody awaits my reply with lazy interest. Shafîg makes as though to speak, but thinks better of it.

"The moon is one," I replied, "This moon which we see here is the same moon which the Syrians see; and the Egyptians, and the Indians, and all the world."

Hasan looked serious, but would make no comment. He was unconvinced: I had given him no proof.

"We had two hâjjis from Esh-Shâm in the past year," said Shafîg, between the whiffs of his shîsha, "and while they were with us there happened an eclipse of the moon. The call to prayer was chanted for the prayer of eclipse,* and the two Shâmis went to the

* Solât el Khusûf—a special prayer decreed to be performed when the moon is eclipsed. Similarly Solât el Kusûf—for an eclipse of the sun.

Haram with the other people in order to pray. When they arrived at the Haram, the one said to the other, 'Then is our moon in Esh-Shâm eclipsed, O my brother?'

" 'No, wallah!' said the other. 'The prayer is for the moon of Mekka.'

" 'Good!' said the first man. 'Then I do not intend to pray just because the moon of Mekka is eclipsed. That is the Mekkans' matter. I am a Shâmi, and if our moon in Esh-Shâm is not eclipsed, by the life of thy beard I do not pray.' And upon that he left the Haram."

Our company all laughed at this, excepting Hasan. He had evidently not yet fathomed the matter. At the outset, I think, Shafîg was the only one-moon man. All the rest had been for plurality. But they were quicker to understand Shafîg's attitude and opinion than was Hasan.

I liked Hasan, and I thought I would try to convince him of the moon's unity. To attempt to convince a bigoted Muslim by science without religion was hopeless.

"In the Enlightening Book,"* I told him, "we find Chapter *The Moon.* Had there been more than one moon, would not this have been called Chapter *A Moon* or Chapter *The Moons?*"

Hasan smiled a sudden glorified smile of perfect belief.

"True!" said he. "Wallah, true, Hâjj Ahmad!"

Then he commenced to chant from memory Chapter *The Moon:*—

" 'The last hour approacheth, and the moon is split asunder . . ."

* The Korân.

The others murmured together. "Wallah true! The moon, he is one."

If you would change the opinion of an old-fashioned Muslim on any such point as this, you may best do so by giving him evidence from the Korân or the Traditions. You may hardly accomplish your object in any other way.

On another evening as we sat in the coffee-yard at Birka, Hasan said: "The moon has not yet risen. It is still below the earth."

"We neither know whether it is below the earth or above the earth, O my little son!" said Uncle Yûsef decisively. "No one knows that save He, and He knows all things."

"Praise to Him!" murmured the sitting company, softly.

"Some of them say that verily the earth is round," said Sabri.

"I take refuge in God!" said Abdurrahmân, and added. "When I was a little one at school—that Turkish school which used to be on Jebel Hindi—the schoolmaster taught us geography . . ."

"A Turk, not so?" interrupted Sabri.

"A Turk," Abdurrahmân assented. "And he used to teach the students that the earth is round."

"I take refuge in God!" exclaimed Tahsîn the coffee-server, who, in passing, had stopped to hear the tale.

Hasan sat silent, his eyes seeking earnestly about the lips of Abdurrahmân for further speech.

"When the teacher came to the matter of the earth's roundness," proceeded Abdurrahmân, "wallah, I put my fingers into my ears . . . and so I never was taught that cursed lie."

All nodded, gravely approving. Abdurrahmân had done the right thing.

"The earth—she is a flat plain," said Amm Shafîg, "with mountains around her edges. Not so, Amm Yûsef?"

But Amm Yûsef, an old man now, had seen many great truths shattered into oblivion by steam and electricity. He had travelled in Turkey and in Southern Europe.

"We know not," said he. "God is More Knowing."

As they sat murmuring praise to Him who is All-knowing, I pondered as to how they might become convinced that the earth was not flat. They believed that there were a series of earths disposed as in layers, one above the other. Then I reflected that they were fortunate in believing something, no matter though it were incorrect. They were in no doubt. If I could not convincingly prove to them the truth of the earth's roundness, then it was better for all of us that I should say nothing. I could recall no verse of the Korân to meet the need, and nothing short of Korânic proof would have been adequate.

Nevertheless, there is Korânic proof of this, as it was received as an acknowledged fact by many of the learned as early as the fifth century of the Hijra. In a book by El Ghazâli in manuscript, which I saw in the library at Mekka, the earth is stated to be spherical.

* * * * *

Sometimes our coterie went to a coffee-house in the Jarwal quarter, where the road passes by to Wâdi Fâtima, or they foregathered in the house of Shafîg, or in that of Hasan.

Before the Wahhâbî occupation they were in the

habit of frequenting the Hashîsh-smokers' coffee-house near El Maala, but as this lay on the road between Mekka and the house of Ibn Sa'ûd it was always liable to be entered by passing Wahhâbîs, and consequently smoking was out of the question there. Therefore the smoking fraternity no longer patronised it.

Shortly after the hour of el 'eshâ (about eight o'clock in the evening, or a quarter past one by Arabic time) our party would leave the coffee-house and saunter homeward. Arrived at his house the Mekkan eats a little supper of fruit, or bread and sweetmeat, or the cold residue of the afternoon meal, and then he mounts to the roof, accompanied by his wife or one of his wives, to sleep.

There were two sections of roof to Abdurraḥmân's house, one of which was on a higher plane than the other. My host occupied the upper roof, and I had the lower one. Here I slept close under the stars. Our house was one of the highest of those which surrounded the Mosque, and by looking through a small aperture in the eastern wall of my roof I could obtain a view of the Haram below.

XV

DESCRIPTION OF THE KAABA

SOON after sunrise on the second day after the return from ʿArafa, Abdul Fattâh came into my room and informed me that the Kaaba was open.

The key of the House is kept by the Shaykh of the family of Bani Shayba, and has been in the care of the successive heads of that family since pre-Islamic times. The name of the present shaykh is Abdul Câdir Esh-Shaybi, and he alone may open the door of the Bayt Allah. Abdul Fattâh once informed me that the lock would refuse to turn if the key was inserted by anybody save the Shaybi. This old gentleman, having opened the door, sits aloft on the threshold, and takes toll of those who would enter. I never saw anybody enter without payment save the Wahhâbîs, and I have no doubt that the fees of those puritans were paid to the Shaybi, directly or indirectly, by their diplomatic Sultân.

Accompanied by Abdul Fâttâh, I descended to the Haram, and leaving my sandals in the care of one of the old women who sit near the Kaaba, I joined the struggling horde which swayed and heaved before the door of the House. The crowd was well seasoned with Wahhâbî, and was consequently very active. On the marble pavement of the Matâf, below the door of the Bayt Allah, stood two black slaves belonging to the Shaybi. These were doing there best to keep the crowd from achieving its evident object of scaling the wall

and swarming over the threshold. One of them removed a small ladder, by the aid of which the aged Shaybi had mounted to the door, and passed it over the heads of the crowd, to one of the eunuch servants of the Mosque, so that the hâjjis should not make use of it to rush the door. The beautiful green veil, embroidered with silver and gold, hung in its place before the door, and at intervals it was drawn aside in order to allow of the entrance or egress of devotees. Behind this veil the door of the Kaaba stood open, and on one side of the threshold the grey-bearded Shaybi squatted, while at the other side stood two of the younger members of his house.

I looked round once to seek Abdul Fattâh, but I failed to find him. A slight youth, he had found himself unable to force his way through the crowd.

For some moments I made no effort to reach the door of the Kaaba, but swayed passively with the multitude in order to observe what was happening. I noticed that the Wahhâbîs mounted on one another's shoulders, and scrambled over the threshold as though they were breaking into a desert fort. Some of the foreign hâjjis and poor dervishes endeavoured to imitate their example. These were ruthlessly pushed down by the youths on the threshold, or pulled back by the slaves below. I observed, however, that those who, as they pushed their way forward, held out a serious piece of money met with no repulse, but were allowed to enter unopposed.

A memorable scene was this at the Navel of the World. Multitudes of hâjjis performing towâf panted round the base of the huge black-draped cube; while before the door surged that eager crowd composed of elements from many nations. Round about stretched

the cloisters and walls of the Haram. Beyond, on every side, the houses of Mekka rose in tiers—closely packed upon the lower slopes of the barren hills—overlooking the open quadrangle. Above the house-tops the stark mountain peaks stood, and over all blazed the sun.

With some difficulty I extracted a mejîdi from the fold of the silken shawl about my waist, and held it out above my head towards the guardians of the door. At once one of them stretched out his hands to me, took my hand with the mejîdi in one of his, and started to pull me up. As I struggled to the threshold, the second youth placed one of his hands under my left arm, and he too helped me to scale the wall. I had begun to feel that I was as good as inside the House, when suddenly a great claw was laid upon my back, and another grasped my left leg. I was being pulled back to earth again, but still I struggled to get over the threshold, and still the Shaybi's youths hauled upon my arms.

"Let him be!" ordered one of the youths. "His money is with us."

At that magic word the slave below relaxed his grip, and I stumbled breathlessly to my feet on the floor of the Kaaba.

"This is whom?" asked the Shaybi somnolently; but I was performing the prostration in honour of the Bayt Allah.

I rose, and was in the act of walking into the pitch-dark interior of the House, when a man joined me—unseen but felt.

"Are you from Egypt?" he asked.

"From Syria," I replied briefly.

Three more hâjjis coming in at the door stumbled against us in the darkness. The chamber was full of

incense-smoke, and stifling with heat. We moved towards the south-western side, bringing up close to the wall.

"This is the Prophet's Prayer-Niche," said my companion. "Money here!"

As he said this, he held up his open hand, and I saw, lying in the palm, a coin shining in the dim light. This was evidently his way of expressing himself. Having, doubtless, been frequently misunderstood by non-Arabic-speaking hâjjis, it had become this man's custom to accompany the word "filûs" with the display of a coin. I do not know who the man was, but I presume he was another of the Shaybi's "youths." I gave him five piastres, and then proceeded to perform a prayer of two prostrations in the Prophet's Prayer-Niche.

This being completed, my invisible guide, holding me by the sleeve, conducted me to the Northern Corner (Er-Rukn esh-Shâmi). Here there is, as it were, a tiny room built within the corner of the Kaaba. It is only some three feet square, and it contains the stairs which lead to the roof. The hâjjis are not admitted to this little chamber. It is fitted with a door, before which hangs a magnificent veil, similar to that which adorns the outer door. This spot is called Bâb et-Towba (The Gate of Repentance).

"This," said my unseen guide, "is Bâb et-Towba Piastres here!"

I gave him a couple of piastres, and prayed a prayer of two rak'as. After the prostrations, my guide said aloud a prayer of repentance of our sins, followed by a supplication for their forgiveness. This I repeated after him.

We went next to the centre of the north-eastern

wall, which is that in which the door of the Kaaba is situated.

"This," said my companion, "is the Wall of the Door. Two prostrations here—and a little money!"

I paid and prayed.

Finally, we stood at the middle of the south-eastern wall, by which time the amount of my last contribution had dwindled to half a piastre. However, I think my guide felt satisfied with the constant though weakening responses which I had made to his promptings, for he now left me to myself for some moments, instead of firmly guiding me out of the door. The latter was the fate of most of the hâjjis, and they were, naturally, unable to make any protest, still less any resistance, in so sacred a place.

Finding myself alone, I went round the walls, rubbing the palms of my hands on them, and then on my face and my clothes, in order to anoint myself with the virtue exuded by those holy stones. While doing this I was able to carry out, without arousing suspicion, my purpose of observing closely all that the Kaaba contained. In the course of attaining this object I was greatly hampered, however, by the complete darkness of the interior of the unventilated Temple. Only when, at intervals, the veil of the door was drawn aside in order to let out or to admit the hâjjis could I see anything at all.

The floor of the Kaaba is raised by a single step of eight or nine inches above the level of the threshold; while the threshold itself is raised nearly seven feet above the pavement of the Matâf. Both the floor of the House and the threshold are of white marble, in which are a few dark veins. The interior walls are also lined with slabs of this stone. Up to a height of four feet from

the floor these are undecorated, with the exception that let into each of the four walls there are one or two panels, also of marble, bearing chiselled records of the various repairs which have been carried out on the Bayt Allah at different times, together with the names of the princes by whose orders these repairs were done. A mosaic tablet in the south-eastern wall bears the words "Allah" and "Muhammad" chiselled in an oblong centre-piece of alabaster, which is surrounded by a rough design of angular form in red and white marbles. From a height of some four feet above the floor the marble panelling of the Kaaba is carved in the form of a frieze of a rough acanthus design in raised relief. This decoration extended upwards to at least the point, some eight feet above the floor, at which the walls became obscured by hanging draperies of rich red silk. Ordinarily these drapings hang down to the floor and completely conceal the walls, but whenever the Kaaba is opened to visitors they are drawn up by means of cords, so as to be preserved from the touch of the hâjjis. The ceiling was also draped with sheeny silken hangings of a red material.

The roof of the Kaaba is carried on wooden beams, supported by three columns of knotted brown wood. These columns, which taper slightly, appear to be perfectly straight tree-trunks from which the bark has been stripped. They are not planed, and they bear no decoration save a protective casing or panelling of woodwork, which extends to a height of six feet from the floor. The diameter of these columns at the point immediately above the top of the panelling is about a foot.

They extend in a straight line across the chamber from south-east to north-west, and are equidistant

from the Wall of the Door and the south-western wall. The first column which is met with upon entering is situated opposite the south-eastern wall, at the distance of one-third of the chamber's length. The third column is situated very close to the north-western wall, being at a distance of only one yard from it, probably because it helps to support the staircase which leads to the roof. The middle column is equidistant from the first and the third, and is in a straight line with them. Extending between the columns, at a height of twelve feet from the floor, is a horizontal wooden beam from which hang a large number of silver lamps and incense burners of differing sizes and shapes. Some of these objects may have been of gold, but I was unable to satisfy myself on that point, by reason of the lack of light. A number of the incense-burners were alight, and were emitting wreaths of sweet suffocating smoke. Perspiration streamed down my face, and breathing was difficult.

To the left of the door of the Kaaba stood an octagonal object, either a coffer or a table, of carved wood, two feet high and of the same measurement from side to side. It was covered with a green silk cloth, and upon it lay the embroadered silken bag in which the Shaybi keeps the key of the House.

The door of the Kaaba is of massive carved wood, heavily plated with silver. At present the side-posts of the doorway are somewhat decayed at their bases, where also the silver plating is in bad repair.

I had now seen all that it was possible for me to see; and the hâjjis, flocking in from the by-ways of the city at the news that the Kaaba was open, seemed to be constantly increasing the press of humanity within that confined space. I made my way to the door, and

dropping a couple of coins into the outstretched hands of the Shaybi's youths, I was able to pass out amongst a party of Bokhârans; and slither down to the pavement beneath. For a moment I was dazzled by the blinding sunlight, and feeling many clutching hands about my person, I thought for a moment that I must have made myself unpopular in some way. As my eyes became accustomed to the strong light, however, I found that a mob of ragged beggars and unclean dervishes were anxious to become more closely acquainted with me. They crowded round me, and rubbed their hands on mine; they drew their hands down my back, my chest, and my arms, and then rubbed them on their own faces, and over their limbs and breasts. All the while they uttered prayers and praise to God, mixed with greetings and congratulations to me—shaking and kissing my hands the while. These poor people, having no money with which to fee the Shaybi, were obliged to content themselves with a little of the Kaaba's virtue borrowed at second hand from more fortunate pilgrims.

Abdul Fattâh joined me on the outskirts of the crowd.

"May Allah accept your visitation," said he.

The Kaaba is opened to men on seven fixed occasions during the year, and to women on seven others. In addition to these occasions, it used to be opened on several nights in the year in order that the Sharîf of Mekka might say a special prayer within for the Khalîfa. There being no Khalîfa at present, this practice is in abeyance. The interior of the House is also washed on the 20th of Rabî' el-Awwal, and on the 20th of Du-l Giada. On these occasions it is washed six times with ordinary water, and then receives a seventh

washing with rose-water. The Muslims consider it a very blessed proceeding to drink water which has been used for this purpose. After one of these washings, old Hasan, the Zemzemi, offered me a little bowl of the rose-water which had been used. I drank it hardily, but wished I had left the Haram by another gate, and so avoided the old man's kindness.

The Kaaba is also opened when its covering is changed, and frequently during the Hajj season, in order to give as many hâjjis as possible an opportunity to enter.

On the 28th of Dul-l Giada the lower part of the covering is cut off to a height of eight feet, and a length of white calico is sewn on in its place. This practice seems to be done by the Shaybi merely in order that he may sell a part of the kiswa to the hâjjis. It is his custom to do this some ten days before the Pilgrimage, so that his agents may have plenty of time in which to sell the pieces of fabric. Were he to wait until the 10th of Du-l Hijja, on which date the old covering is exchanged for the new, the hâjjis, having completed their pilgrimage, would pay little attention to souvenir-buying, in their eagerness to return to their own countries. During the ten days preceding the Hajj, vendors of little pieces of the old kiswa are to be seen squatting on the marble pavement outside Bâb es-Salâm.

The Kaaba is said to have been first clothed by the followers of the Himyarite king Abu Karb Asad, in 390 A.D. They dressed the Temple (which at that time housed the idols of the Pagan Arabs) in a covering of striped hair-cloth. Subsequently it became the custom of several of the tribes to supply the covering by turns, putting each new one on over the old one. Probably the only occasions upon which the rotting mass was

removed were when the Kaaba itself was damaged by floods and required repairing.

The fact that the Prophet clothed the Kaaba consecrates that act as an Islamic rite, and ever since his death the Khalîfas or other princes have carried out this duty annually, or more frequently. In 160 A.H. the Abbaside Khalîfa El Muhdi ordered the removal of the accumulated mass of ancient coverings, and since that time it has been the custom to remove the old kiswa annually before the new one is put on. After the fall of the Abbaside Dynasty of Bagdad, the kiswa was sent to Mekka by the Imâms of the Yemen or the Sultâns of Egypt. Finally Egypt alone became responsible for this, and remains so to the present day. The Egyptian kiswa is made of a thick black material —a mixture of silk and wool. About the upper part, so that it encircles the Kaaba at some fifteen feet below the top of the parapet, is a handsome belt, two feet broad, which consists of Korânic texts beautifully worked in gold-plated silver wire. In addition to the kiswa, the following articles are sent:—

1. The veil of the door.
2. The veil of the Door of Repentance.
3. The bag for the key.
4. The covering for the Makâm Ibrâhîm.
5. The covering for the door of the pulpit.

The above articles are not all sent annually, but whenever one of them shows signs of wear the Amîr of the Pilgrim Caravan reports the matter in Cairo on his return, and a new one is sent with the next year's caravan.*

* The Egyptians, in consequence of a dispute which occurred, in 1926, between the Egyptian Caravan and the Wahhâbîs, discontinued the old custom of sending the covering for the Kaaba. Ibn Sa'ûd has now (1928) engaged weavers to make the kiswa in Mekka, and the belt is embroidered in India.

DESCRIPTION OF THE KAABA

The Kaaba measures some forty feet in length by thirty-three feet in breadth,* and in height, including the topmost part of the walls, which forms a parapet round the edge of the roof, is some fifty feet. It is firmly and massively built of the fine Mekkan granite, while the roof, which is sunk a distance of two and a half or three feet below the top of the walls, is of a greyish-white marble. The foundations of the Kaaba are reinforced by a sloping bulwark of marble, which is built into the angle formed by the wall of the House and the ground, on all its four sides. It varies somewhat in size on each of the four sides. On the north-western side it is a foot thick at its base, and about eighteen inches high, while on each of the remaining three sides these measurements are transposed, becoming approximately as follows—thickness at base, eighteen inches; height, one foot. This bulwark is called Esh-Shâẓirwân. It presents a smooth polished surface which slopes downward at a sharp angle until it is within eight inches of the ground. From this point it is perpendicular. The Shâzirwân may be compared in miniature with the line of putty which is pressed into the angle formed by the window-frame and its sheet of glass. In this manner the Shâzirwân fits into the angle at the base of the Kaaba. Its use is doubtless to reinforce the foundations against the advent of floods. There is a gap in the Shâzirwân opposite to the door. The sloping surface is fitted with a series of brass rings, forty-eight in number, to which the cords of the covering are tied. Similar rings are fitted to the inner side of the roof parapet. The kiswa does not cover the roof, but only the four walls of the Kaaba.

* Neither the two opposing long walls nor the two opposing short ones are exactly similar in length.

The House possesses but one door at the present time. This is situated in the north-eastern wall at a distance of six feet from the "corner of the Black Stone," and is raised between six and seven feet above the ground. The door itself is over six feet high. Formerly a second door existed in the south-western wall, but this was closed in the first century of Islâm by El Hajjâj ibn Yûsef Eth-Thagafi.

In the middle of the parapet, high up in the north-western wall, is a small aperture at the level of the roof. Through this aperture there protudes a massive rain-water spout of solid gold, called El Mîzâb or Mîzâb er-Rahma (The Water-spout of Mercy). In shape it resembles a long narrow trough, square in section, seven or eight inches wide, and nearly four feet long. At its end a flat piece of metal protrudes vertically downwards, and a row of spikes extends along the upper edges of its two sides. The latter addition was probably supplied in order to discourage the pigeons of the Haram from settling upon the Mîzâb, and thereby, in course of time, loosening it. The gold water-spout was presented by the Turkish Sultân Abdul Majîd in the middle of last century (1270 A.H.)

In the eastern corner of the Kaaba, at a height of nearly five feet from the ground, the Black Stone is embedded. The Arabs attribute a fabulous origin to this object, and they believe that it was first placed in the Kaaba by Abraham. It is probably an aerolite which flashed through the atmosphere and fell in the vicinity of an encampment of Arabs, who took it up fearfully, and made of it, if not their God, at least an object of extreme reverence. At the time of Muhammad's birth it was one of the many idols in the Kaaba, and he himself retained it, as it was considered to have

been given to man by God, to be a token round which they might gather and praise Him in universal brotherhood. Some say that it contains the document bearing God's covenant with mankind. The Muslims believe that the Stone was originally white, but that it became black in consequence of being touched and kissed by sinners. It is not black, but is of a dark red-brown colour approaching in places to blackness. Its visible face is roughtly circular, being some ten inches in diameter, and it is set in a massive silver mounting. It it deeply embedded in the wall of the Kaaba, but its length appears to be unknown, and unrecorded in writings, at the present time. The outward face of the Stone is worn down to such an extent, or is set so deeply in the metal mounting, that when he kisses it the pilgrim's face is completely hidden in the orifice.

It is incorrect to say, as some writers have done, that the Muhammadans worship the Black Stone. Before kissing this object the Prophet, addressing it, said: "Verily I know that thou art but a stone. Thou canst do no harm, neither canst thou confer advantage." Abu Bakr and Umar, the first and second Khalîfas, in similar case said the same words, and added: "And if I had not seen God's Messenger (God bless and give him peace) kiss thee, neither would I have kissed thee."

In the year 317 A.H. a community of Arabs of Bahrayn, known as the Carmatites, invaded Mekka in the season of the Hajj, and having killed thirty thousand of the Muslims, they tore the Black Stone from its place in the wall and took it away with them. For twenty-two years the Stone remained at Hijr in El Hasâ in Eastern Arabia, where the chief of the Carmatites, Abu Tâhir, had made his headquarters, and to which place he desired to divert the Muhammadan

pilgrimage. Ultimately the Stone was sent back to Mekka by a successor of Abu Tâhir in 339 A.H. In the course of this adventure it had been broken into pieces, but these having been re-assembled and mounted in a silver band, the Stone was again built into the wall of the Kaaba, where it has remained ever since.

Again in 413 A.H. the mad Sultân of Egypt, El Hâkim, sent an emissary to Mekka with instructions to destroy the Stone. His object is supposed to have been the diversion of the Pilgrimage to Cairo. The emissary, armed with a bar of iron, entered the Haram in the guise of a dervish. Striking the stone with his iron bar, he cried " How long will you worship this stone? Till when will you continue to worship this stone and Muhammad? " He managed to chip three small pieces from the Stone before he was seized by the outraged hâjjis, and torn to pieces.

Both Abu Tâhir the Carmatite and El Hâkim believed themselves to be divine.

Although the jagged edges and projections, which were doubtless once present on the surface of the Stone as the result of the rough handling which it received, have long since been worn smooth by the touch of millions of devotees, yet it is plainly apparent that cracks exist in it. The Stone exhibits a broken-up appearance. In several places the heads of silver nails are visible on its surface, and it is completely surrounded by a ring of brown cement which holds it rigidly in the silver mounting. The latter is extremely massive, and is oval in outline. Its vertical diameter is nearly two feet, and its horizontal diameter two and a half feet. The Stone is situated exactly at the corner of the Kaaba, and inclining towards neither wall, it faces nearly due east.

At the southern angle of the Kaaba, called the Rukn el Yemâni, is situated another stone which is simply a piece of Mekkan granite. It is built into the angle of the wall at a height of five feet from the ground, and is some eighteen inches in length, but very narrow. It is placed in a vertical position. This corner of the House has been strengthened with large iron bolts and nails, driven into the cement between the stones. The heads of these bolts are quite free from rust, as they are kept burnished by the constant touch of hands.

There are two small openings, the edges of which are strongly bound with canvas, in the kiswa where it hangs before the two Stones.

When the Kaaba is in need of repair, the Shaybi selects a number of pious men who are skilled in the arts of building, choosing, as far as possible, men with large beards. Each one of those selected is presented with a complete set of new clothes—trousers, shirt, thawb, and turban—made of white calico. They are then commanded to bathe thoroughly and put on their new clothes. They next perform the lesser ablution (el wudhû), towâf, and pray two prostrations. They are then ready to work in the Kaaba. Each man, upon entering the House, performs a prayer, and then works for an hour. Having completed this, he is replaced by another. Rose-water is used for mixing the mortar, and the stones are squared before being taken into the Kaaba.

At the north-eastern side of the Kaaba, some two feet to the right-hand side of the door, there is an oblong trough sunk in the ground. It is close against the foundations, and is a foot deep, six feet long, and four feet wide. It is lined with white marble, and has three tombstone-shaped slabs of green or black stone

let into its floor. This trough is known as El Maajan (i.e. the Kneading Trough), and is said to be the place in which Abraham and Ismayl mixed their mortar when building the Kaaba. It is a favourite place of prayer, for here the angel Gabriel prayed with Muhammad.

On the north-western side of the House there is an open space known as the El Hijr or Hijr Ismayl. This is enclosed within a semi-circular wall, some four and a half feet in height and nearly five feet thick, which bears the name El Hataym. The extremities of the Hataym curve round as though to meet the two corners of the Kaaba, but they stop short of them at a distance of some eight feet. The outer side of each extremity of the Hataym wall is not directly in line with the corner of the Kaaba on either side. The space thus enclosed is some thirty feet across, from the wall of the Kaaba beneath the water-spout to the centre of the arc of the Hataym. Its lateral measurement is twenty-seven feet between the inner sides of the Hataym's extremities.

The Hijr Ismayl is said to be part of the original site of the Kaaba, which latter was reduced in size when it was rebuilt by the Curaysh. It is paved with white marble, inlaid with several tombstone-shaped slabs of green and black stone. Two of the latter are reputed to cover the tombs of Ismayl and his mother Hagar. Thin lines of the same green and black stones, arranged in patterns, are let into this pavement also. Prayers said in this enclosure are considered as having been said in the Bayt Allah, as the latter formerly extended over this spot. The pilgrim performing towâf passes round the outside of the Hataym so as to include the Hijr Ismayl within his course. The Hataym wall is

covered, both on its sides and its top, with slabs of white marble, which are copiously inscribed with Korânic and other texts.

Surrounding the Kaaba and the Hijr Ismayl there is a broad pavement of smooth marble, some forty-five feet wide, called El Matâf, the Place of Circumambulation. It describes an irregular oval, the dimensions of which are probably 150 feet by 125 feet. In the centre of this oval the Kaaba, and the Hijr with its Hataym, stand isolated. The marble pavement slopes gently downwards from the base of the Kaaba, until it meets another pavement, of granite, which is higher than itself by nine or ten inches. Just as the Matâf encircles the Kaaba so does the granite pavement encircle the Matâf. It is about thirty feet wide.

In addition to the interior of the Kaaba, there are four places on the outside of it at which it is particularly auspicious to make supplication to God. These are: the Multazam (that part of the Kaaba's wall which is between the door and the black Stone); the north-western wall, beneath the water-spout; the Maajan; and the place in the south-western wall where the second door of the Kaaba formerly existed.

The Muslims commonly suppose that great treasures are secreted in the Kaaba. Once Sabri, who besides being a Zemzemi was attached to the Mosque service in the capacity of " Igniter of the Incense," related to me the following anecdote:

He said that the Shaybi deputed him to clean the gold and silver lamps within the Kaaba. While he worked, the door was kept partly open so as to allow light to enter. Sabri sat behind the door. He was busy polishing a lamp, he said, when suddenly one of the marble slabs which line the walls fell outwards and

rested against his knee. Looking up, startled, he was amazed to see that the collapse of the stone had disclosed a hollow place in the wall. In this niche, said Sabri, were piles and piles of large gold dînârs.

" Wallah, Hâjj Ahmad! " said he earnestly. "Each dînâr was like the Turkish five-guinea gold piece. And I looked at them and, Wallah! there were ten thousands of golden dînârs or more.

" How many? " I asked.

" Ten thousands, by the life of thine eye! " he cried, " and I examined one, and saw the words " Lâ ilâha ill Allah " on one face, and on the second face was the date and the Sultân's name. Only I could not read his name."

Sabri added that he hastily put the coin back in its place and replaced the marble slab, and said nothing about the matter.

At another time I questioned Amm Yûsef concerning this hidden hoard, and his reply was: "No one knows what is in the Kaaba. We speak not of it; and when we enter God's House we do not look about us in order to observe the decorations, but concentrate our thoughts upon the Lord, the Preserver—He who makes us rich without money. But truly it is said the Kaaba contains great stores of treasure—gold and silver and gems, and valuable books also. These are for the succour of the Muslimîn in an extremity. But we do not know what is in it. God is more knowing. He knows all things. Praise to Him."

In spite of this testimony, however, my personal opinion is that the only articles of value in the Kaaba are the lamps and incense-burners. At the same time I should certainly not be in the least astonished if the fact were proved to be otherwise. The tomb-chamber

of the Prophet at El Medîna contained jewels and ornaments worth over two millions of pounds sterling a few years ago.

The frontispiece to this book is an enlargement of the only photograph which I took in Wahhâbite Arabia. It shows the Kaaba from the direction of Bâb es-Safâ, i.e. from the south-east.

XVI

ENCOUNTERS

ONE day I went with Abd esh-Shukûr to the scene of a fire which had broken out in a little street between the Zugâg el Hajar and Sûk el-Layl.

We found the house, a four-storeyed one, still smouldering. Numbers of Mekkans, dwellers in neighbouring houses, were running between the bâzân in Sûk el-Layl and the burning house, carrying petrol tins and girbas filled with water. These were taken up to the roofs of the adjoining houses on either side, and the water poured into one end of wooden rain-water spouts, which had been detached from their places in the roofs for that purpose. The men who held the spouts directed them over the burning building so that the stream of water passing through them should pour down upon it. This is the Mekkans' method of putting out a fire. The neighbours regard it as a point of honour to render all the assistance in their power, and official notice of the occurrence is taken by the police, some of whom also turn out and help. At the time of which I write, however, there was no regular police force in Mekka, the Sharîf Ali having taken the Hâshimite police with him to Jidda, where they formed part of his army. Order was kept in Mekka by a squad of powerful black slaves belonging to Ibn Sa'ûd.

Having observed the scene for some minutes I left Abd esh-Shukûr, who wished to go to Sûk el-Layl,

and crossing the Muddaâ I made my way homeward through the quarter of El Garâra.

As I walked up the dark straggling alley, I suddenly heard a familiar voice cry "Sallâh ed-Dîn!"

Now this word represented the other half of my name. It had been conferred upon me by a well-meaning old shaykh (of a corpulence most pronounced, and a piety) as a reward for my industry in mastering some of the mysteries of jurisprudence and Korânic commentary.

The voice gave me a sudden shock, and almost simultaneously the sight of its owner's face confirmed my apprehension. The next moment I was shaking the hand of one named Husni, a native of Aleppo, who had known me as an Englishman in Egypt. I had not seen him for some weeks preceding my departure from the banks of the Nile, and had thought him to be in Damascus, whither it was then his purpose to proceed. He was now accompanied by a dark-skinned Arab wearing the Bedouin dress.

Husni was rather an interesting character. I had met him in the previous year at Cairo. I was one day sitting outside a coffee-house in the quarter called Bâb el Khalg. My companion was a certain Egyptian shaykh of a jovial turn, who had, in the course of our acquaintanceship, enlightened me upon many esoteric matters —some of an edifying nature; others quite the reverse.

As we sat beside the little marble-topped table, sipping coffee, I became aware of the silent approach of an outlandish figure, which slowly threaded its way among the coffee-drinkers on the pavement. He was a medium-sized yellow-skinned man, with small slanting eyes and a hairless face, dressed in loose trousers and jacket of unbleached calico. On his head was a large, battered, and weather-worn sun-helmet. He was a

Chinaman; and so unchanged was his appearance from that of the lower-class men of the China ports, that he might have left Hongkong or Shanghai that very morning.

As the Chinaman approached, I beckoned to him. He glided up to our table and stood before me, and his expressionless detachment was such that it merely seemed as if a shadow had fallen there. A small cloud which passed across the sun just then was far more expressive than he. He carried a large basket, which contained collapsible rosettes and flowers made of coloured paper—hand-made things, such as the Chinese have excelled in fashioning for thousands of years. In their own country, for wedding processions and other displays, they make pagodas as large as omnibuses from nothing but paper on a cane framework—fashioned and painted in all kinds of fantastic designs—large-bellied mandarins and writhing dragons.

I enquired from what town he came, but he knew no Arabic. I then addressed him in the queer pidgin-English* of the China ports, and of this language I found that he possessed some knowledge.

In the midst of our conversation a young man rose from a neighbouring table, and approaching the Chinaman, began to address him in Chinese. This man, who was dressed in an European suit and a tarbûsh, was clean-shaven and rather thin. His complexion was pale and sallow. He was Husni. Having conversed for some moments, he turned to my companion and me, and told us that the Chinaman hailed from Shanghai, that he was travelling in order to see the world, and making his living by selling his paper flowers.

* "Pidgin" is a Chinese corruption of the word "business."

I bought a rosette, and the Chinaman acknowledged my having paid several times its value by touching the coin to his forehead—his face, of old yellow ivory, never relaxing its carven lines. The shadow then glided away among the crowd of chattering Egyptians.

Husni, with the *bonhomie* of the Muhammadan East, sat down at our table. I soon learnt that his father had taken him from Aleppo to India when he himself was but a tiny child. From India they had travelled, by stages, to China; and at Hongkong Husni's father had become connected with the local agent of a line of steamers owned by an Indian Muhammadan. During the fifteen years of his residence in Hongkong, Husni had acquired a knowledge of both the Hokien and the Cantonese dialects. Finally he and his father had returned to their native Syria. Husni, however, was an inveterate wanderer. He had visited every town in Northern Africa and Asia Minor, and had also been to Mekka and El Medîna. He and I subsequently met frequently, and I found him an entertaining companion. He liked to hint that he was a potential king-maker, and he corresponded with several Islamic societies in India and elsewhere.

This was the man who now greeted me in Mekka.

I returned his salutation with guarded enthusiasm, endeavouring to cool his ardour with the intention of telling him privately that I had done him the honour of adopting his nationality for the time being. But in the next moment he had turned to his companion, the Bedouin.

"This one," said he, effusively, "is one of the greatest of the English, and a Muslim."

As he heard the word "Inkilîzi," Husni's companion looked serious and careful.

"But are you of a truth an Inkilîzi?" he asked, regarding me earnestly.

"Inkilîzi!" said Husni in a tone of finality.

"Ay, yes!" I replied. "I am an Inkilîzi."

"But a Muslim—of course," he persisted.

Again Husni anticipated me with his effusive exaggeration.

"Muslim! This one is of the learned!" he cried with conviction.

"Naturally—a Muslim," I assured the Bedouin.

At that his gaze grew less intent. "El hamdu Lillah!" exclaimed he, as we turned to walk up the street.

"But say not thus to others than ourselves, O Sallâh ed-Dîn!" said Husni. "The ignorant ones do not understand. You have told them?"

"No," I replied. "They understand that I am of the people of Syria."

"Wallah, it is better so!" said he. "Neither will we tell it."

Nevertheless, the fact that there was an Englishman in Mekka was known, soon after that, to some of the minions of Ibn Sa'ûd. Going one day to the printing-press in order to purchase a copy of the Wahhâbî newspaper, "Umm el Qurâ," I found the editor, a Syrian, there. With exaggerated politeness he said that "one" had pointed me out to him and told him about me, and would I like to meet the Sultân? To this question I replied with a prompt affirmative. I thought it probable that they had decided to subject me to a verbal examination, as Muhammad Ali did in the case of Burckhardt. In such case my best plan was to meet them more than half way. In the result, however, I was never questioned at all, from which I conclude

that my practice satisfied any observer who knew of my true identity.

Each, in his own heart, knows the significance of his intentions, whether good or bad. As for me, my sole object in assuming disguise was that I might be inconspicuous. This matter of inconspicuousness is very important in a country largely inhabited by religious fanatics and robbers. Many Persians and other followers of the Shîa or Schism, call themselves Kurds, Bokhârans, or Circassians when making the Pilgrimage, for there is more ill-feeling between these schismatics and the Sunnis (orthodox Muslims) than there ever is between Roman Catholics and Protestants. In the Hijâz, the Shîa fraternity is held in great contempt. Occasionally, too, Sunnis whose avarice is stronger than their vanity, assume the character of persons in a much lower order of society. This enables them to escape with a lesser degree of imposition at the hands of mutawwifs and others, who adjust their charges to the station of the hâjjis.

The Syrian told me that Ibn Sa'ûd would be "sitting" in the Hamîdîya on the following afternoon, and invited me to meet him there. Accordingly I went with him, an hour before sunset, to the office of the government. The reception-room is on the first floor, and its windows overlook the Haram gate called Bâb Umm Hâni. Upon mounting the stairs to the upper landing, I found half a dozen of Ibn Sa'ûd's Bedouin escort sitting there on benches. As we entered the room, the Sultân, who was sitting on a large divan with his back to the window, rose and extended his hand. At the same moment the Syrian told him who I was—"Sallâh ed-Dîn El Inkilîzi."

Abdul Azîz motioned me to a seat beside him on

the divan, and all resumed their seats. There were merely some four or five of his employees in the room. This was in the days before the fall of Jidda. After that event, the word had only to go round that the Sultân was "sitting" in the Hamîdîya, for half the leaders and place-hunters of Mekkan society to crowd into the government building in order to make their flattering speeches and recite their poems of praise.

Ibn Sa'ûd, having politely enquired as to my "state," now launched forth into a long harangue about 'Isa, Muhammad, and religion generally. After a couple of minutes I felt I had had more than enough of that, so in order to change the subject I told him that I thought of writing an account of his career. This appeared to please him exceedingly, and he smilingly expressed his appreciation of my suggestion, saying that he was greatly obliged to me.

Soon afterwards, having read through and approved the manuscript of the editor's leading article for the forthcoming number of his paper, Ibn Sa'ûd rose, and with a word of farewell resumed his sandals and went out. At this time he was using a light motor-car which had recently been brought by sea to El Gunfuda. He now took up his position in the back seat of his car, the chief of the escort sat in front with the driver, the rank and file of the escort ranged themselves along the foot-boards, and away they all went to the house of As-Sagâf in El Abtah.

I subsequently visited Ibn Sa'ûd several times at his palace in the Abtah. On one of these occasions he told me that his concerns were three—"Firstly, Allah; secondly, my beloved . . . Muhammad; thirdly, the Arab nation." On his return from Bahra on the Jidda road, where he had been in conference with a British

mission concerning the boundaries between his territories and those of Transjordania and El Irâk, he told me that an excellent understanding had been arrived at, and that he was exceedingly pleased with the result of the conference; particularly with the fact that certain disputed territories in the Wâdi Sirhân, north of El Jauf, had been ceded to him.

On one occasion I told him the Mekkan tale that the white turban-cloth worn by the Ikhwân in place of the agâl was in reality carried so that it might serve as their burial shroud in case of sudden death on the field of battle.* This made Ibn Sa'ûd laugh, and he told me that they wear it because they think it is the correct head-dress for one given up to religion. Pointing round the circle of grim-faced rascals who had that morning ridden in from the East, and who now sat before him, he said "These have all killed men, and lived by the raid. But now they are mudayyina, and they wear the turban-cloth in order to distinguish themselves from the others." His air of kind approval and of pleasure in the contemplation of them as he made these remarks was very charming. One felt that he understood his rabble infinitely better than anybody else could possibly understand them. They, on their part, looked fixedly at their captain, watching his every expression, with a sort of hard yet half-bashful admiration struggling to sweeten the habitual sourness of their stern visages. They were of the tribe or community of Ghatghat,† the most fanatical and

* This tale was current among the lower classes, but not among the learned. The latter would know that a Muslim killed in the course of a jihâd or holy war (and all Muhammadan wars are jihâds in the Muslim view) requires no shroud. He is a martyr, and is buried in the clothes in which he fell.

† I designate the Ghatghats a "tribe or community", because

violent of all the Nejd Ikhwân. Whenever, as frequently happened, a party of the Ikhwân came to blows with the Mekkan crowd, the Ghatghats were invariably in the thick of the fray. In its grammatical origin the word *ghatghat* means "to boil audibly" (of a cooking-pot) or "to rage and roar" (of the sea). The Nejd Ghatghats live up to their name.

When the news arrived that the British Government, or the government of Transjordania, had occupied Maân and El Akaba, Ibn Sa'ûd took the occasion of my visiting him to indulge in a defiant speech. "Let the Europeans come with their guns, and their armoured cars, and their aeroplanes," said he, "we will retire into our deserts, and then if they try to follow us we will turn upon them." I told him I did not imagine that the European governments wanted anything from his deserts, and that they respected him for upholding his own rights and those of the Arabs.

"El hamdu Lillah!" exclaimed he, looking round the circle of faces with a beaming countenance.

A number of mysterious Syrians arrived in Mekka at various times, by devious routes. At this time Syria was in revolt, and the French were smashing up Damascus with artillery. One of Ibn Sa'ûd's Syrian employees told me that his master had been repeatedly begged to go to the assistance of the Druzes and Syrians, and help them to drive the French out of Syria. His opinion was that the Sultân would have had no hesitation in attacking the French, provided that he could have relied upon Great Britain's neutrality. At this time, however, Jidda and El Medîna were fully occupying his attention.

the communities of the Ikhwân are in most cases composed of elements from a number of tribes. The Ghatghats are drawn chiefly from the tribes of Cahtân and 'Atayba.

As an example of Ibn Sa'ûd's way of exacting obedience from his Bedouins, this incident was recounted to me by Abdulla Damlûji. A number of the Ikhwân had been detailed to join the Wahhâbî forces besieging Yanbua. They, however, requested Ibn Sa'ûd to agree to their remaining in Mekka until after the Hajj. This he refused to allow, but they still argued and murmured, saying that they might not again have so good an opportunity of performing the Pilgrimage. Having chopped logic with them for some minutes, Ibn Sa'ûd suddenly took a sword from one of his attendants, and drawing the blade, he swung it aloft.

"Wallah! You shall go to Yanbua," said he, "and if I see one of you at 'Arafa on the Day of Pilgrimage, wallah, I will slay him on the slope of Jebel Rahma, even as I slew your fathers."

The Bedouins went to Yanbua. No doubt Ibn Sa'ûd would have kept his word had they appeared at 'Arafa.

On the other hand, instead of putting the young princes of the vanquished house of Ibn Rashîd to death, as many Arabs would have done, he is bringing them up with his own sons.

Abdulla Damlûji, whom I have just mentioned, was formerly a doctor in the Turkish service, and is now Ibn Sa'ûd's adviser for foreign affairs. He is a native of Mosul, and is the most accomplished and able of the Sultân's advisers. He has an excellent knowledge of French, and knows something of English. He accompanied Ibn Sa'ûd's second son, Faysal, to England and France in 1926.

During one of my visits to Ibn Sa'ûd, the Shaybi came in to discuss the arrangements for some repairs which were necessary to the roof of the Kaaba. He

kissed the Imâm's shoulder, and seated himself. In the course of the session of the mejlis, he learnt of my nationality, and upon the break-up of the meeting he took me by the arm and invited me to visit him at his house. This I did on a subsequent day. The Shaybi possesses a house at every point in or near Mekka at which he is likely to spend a night or two annually. In Mekka itself he has several houses, some of which are occupied by his kinsmen. He himself usually lives in a house near Es-Safâ, or in a villa of one storey situated on the summit of Abi Cubays.

The path which leads to the top of the hill starts behind Es-Safâ. It ascends in the form of short flights of roughly constructed steps. These flights of steps describe a zig-zag course between the houses which cover the slope of the hill, until, finally, the climber emerges into the open near the summit. At the highest point stands the small mosque which is named after Bilâl, the Prophet's Abyssinian slave, whom he manumitted. This person, who possessed a powerful and musical voice, was appointed by his master to the office of muaddin. He is known among the Muhammadans as "Sayyidna Bilâl"—"Our Lord Bilâl." Bilâl's mosque had been partly demolished by the Wahhâbîs, who thought that the Muslims visited the place in order to worship the departed spirit of black Bilâl, or to beg his intercession with God in their behalf. A magnificent view of the house-crowded Mekkan valley, with the Haram in its centre, is obtained from the summit of Abi Cubays. Behind the mosque of Bilâl, on the further extremity of the hill, there is a small walled enclosure known as the Mosque of the Moon's Splitting-asunder. This is the site upon which Muhammad stood when, in response to the

demands of the Curaysh, he asked God to divide the moon into two pieces. His prayer was answered—one half of the moon appearing on each side of the hill. This and other similar fables were invented, long after Muhammad's death, by some of the more enthusiastic and less balanced of his followers. He himself was endowed with a keen sense of humour and strong critical power. Although he claimed to have had miraculous experiences, he does not appear to have ever arrogated the power to perform miracles.

In front of the mosque of Bilâl, and a little distance down the slope, stands the house of the Shaybi. When I arrived a sweet-mannered Abyssinian slave, dressed in clean white Bedouin clothes, took my name in to his master. In a moment he returned, and leading me through a small ante-chamber in which a number of servants were sitting on the floor, he stood aside for me to pass through a door at the further end. Entering, I found the old gentleman lying down on a thick and magnificent carpet which was spread upon the floor. He was reading an Arabic newspaper published in Java; and his face, which is nearly as black as that of an African, looked grave as he learnt of the state of Islâm in that country. The room, which measured some twenty feet by fifteen, was furnished with carpets, and at either side of it there stood a thickly cushioned divan. Two large and low armchairs stood near an open window, through which the Haram could be seen in the valley below.

The Opener of God's House rose with heavy grunts to greet me, and invited me to take one of the armchairs, he himself taking the other. His first concern, after enquiring as to my "state," was to question me earnestly as to whether I could really read and write

English. I told him that I was better at English than at Arabic, and that amazed him grotesquely, though he knew little of the extent of my knowledge of Arabic. It seemed to him a wonderful thing that anybody should be able to read and write English, and I feel certain that my replies did not convince him of the truth of what I said.

He next told me that his office of Opener of God's House was "the one only office to which a man had been appointed directly by God." In support of this contention he quoted a verse from the chapter entitled *Women*:—"Verily God commandeth you that ye restore unto whom they belong those things entrusted to you." This passage was revealed on the day of Muhammad's triumphant re-entry into Mekka in the year 8 A.H. (see Chapter X). At that time the keys of the Kaaba were held by a great-grandson of Kusay ibn Kilâb—one Othmân ibn Talha, and upon Ali's taking them from him, the Prophet rebuked his companion and commanded him to return the keys to Ibn Talha, saying to the latter. "Here! Take them hereditarily for ever."

"Therefore," said the old man to me, "this office will be filled by my descendants until the Last Day, by God's Command."

Coffee was brought in by the charming Abyssinian slave, whose eyes shone with all the artless kindness, but without the bashfulness, of an unsophisticated girl.

"Where is the boy? Tâhir—where is he?" asked the Shaybi.

"We will bring him immediately, O my sir!" said the slave.

A few moments later there entered the room a little thin Bedouin boy, wild-eyed and portentous of mien.

He was clothed in nothing but a little thawb, dyed brown.

"This one," said the Shaybi to me, "is a boy of the Bedouins, whom I am bringing up at my own cost. His parents are dead."

The boy, who may have been eight or nine years old, came across the carpet with an unnatural secret expression on his little thin face.

"Come, O Tâhir!" said the Shaybi, with an encouraging smile. "Show us your games!"

At once the poor little wretch began to perform all sorts of ludicrous, or rather pitiful, antics for the Shaybi's amusement. He danced and tumbled; he imitated the repulsive actions of a monkey; he barked like a dog and ran across the room on all fours; he caught up a stick and with it performed an imitation of military rifle exercises. The old man laughed heartily at the poor little urchin's foolery, thus encouraging him to further imbecilities. He worked his face and his eyes into idiotic contortions, and all the while the Opener of God's House shook and spluttered with delight. Finally the poor child perched on the Shaybi's knee, and scratched his sides with ape-like realism, while the old ogre stroked his back as though he were indeed a monkey. Several other visitors arriving, I took my departure.

One day I was accosted near the Hamîdîya by a tall pale-faced man, clad in a grey Egyptian caftân and a large white turban. His features were handsome; his beard long and black; his expression thoughtful and ascetic. He was a Dâghestâni—a native of the Caucasus. Having friends among the government officials, he had heard of me, and he now begged of me to teach him English. This person was apparently devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. At the age of twenty he

had left home and kindred, and travelling by the railway from Derbend to Batûm, he had taken ship for Egypt. Arrived in Cairo, he had entered the Muhammadan university of El Azhar. After spending some twelve years in El Azhar he had entered another school, known as Dâr ed-Daawa, in which he had begun the study of English. Recently he had travelled through Palestine and Syria, with the object of returning to his native country by the land route through Asia Minor. In Turkey he had been suspected of espionage, and imprisoned. After months of captivity he had been released and driven over the border into Syria. He then determined to set out for Mekka, and, supporting himself by the sale of finjâns of coffee, and sometimes by teaching, he managed to reach Maân. There he took the train to El Medîna. The Wahhâbîs, however, had damaged the railway line in many places, and consequently the journey occupied thirty days. He might have accomplished it in twenty days on his feet. After visiting the Prophet's tomb, he left El Medîna alone, intending to walk to Mekka. Outside the Prophet's city he was waylaid by Bedouin thieves, and robbed of all he possessed save a few rags; and on arriving at Mekka he felt "nearer to death than to life." In spite of his sufferings he spoke enthusiastically of Arabia as the land of the free, and said that Mekka was the earthly paradise. "For in Mekka," said he, "a man has only to conduct himself according to the teaching of Islâm, in order to be left entirely to himself. Taxation, registration of aliens, psssports, sanitary by-laws, and many other inconvenient matters are practically unknown."

Mekka and El Medîna are the Muhammadan sanctuaries, and since the penetration of the Muhammadan

countries of Asia and Africa by European powers, the permanent foreign population of these two cities has enormously increased. In them the Asiatic or the African patriot, who loves his own country but who is known not to love the foreign country which rules his own, may find an inviolable refuge. For on the yellow plain to westward of these two cities the might of Europe is stayed. It is not stayed by physical obstacles, though there are physical obstacles. It is stayed by an idea—by the idea of a force whose power is unknown. Muhammadans call it the Will of God.

The Dâghestâni's name was Ibn es-Sayyâd, and he admired the Wahhâbîs. He determined to become one of them, and as a preliminary step he changed his "mazhab" or system of jurisprudence from the Shâfi'i to the Hanbali. Then he began to pray among the Wahhâbîs, behind the Makâm el Hanbali. But so soon as poor Ibn es-Sayyâd took his place in the row of worshippers, with his shoulder next to that of a Nejder, the latter would at once leave his place and join himself to the end of another row in front or behind. For nearly six months the patient Caucasian prayed among the wild men, but always a space was left between him and the nearest of them. He was with them, but not of them. At the end of six months he had an idea. He would dress in Bedouin clothes, and make his appearance correspond to that of his heroes. This he did, and it is pleasant to record that on the very first occasion of his transformation, he had the satisfaction of praying with his elbows pressed closely against the unclean abaya of a "brother" on either side of him.

Another person with whom I became acquainted

in Mekka was an educated man of considerable charm —Sharaf Pasha 'Adnân, the chief of the Ashrâf, and one of the candidates for the Amîrate of Mekka before Ibn Sa'ûd made plain his intention not to give any important position to any member of the Ashrâf. Sharaf Pasha's favourite theme concerned the material development of the Hijâz. He saw no reason why there should not be railways and motor-car roads all over the country. "Were we to practise irrigation," said he, "the country of the Arabs, mâ shâ Allah, would become like Egypt and Syria, and one might travel from Mekka to Jidda without seeing the sun—by reason of the shadowing trees which would grow by the way." He would extract petrol from the earth—had it not been found at El Wejh?—copper, quick-silver, iron, and many other minerals also. The Bedouins would abandon their roving life, and till the ground, and . . . and so on.

Just before my arrival in Mekka, there had reached that city a man whose word is law to many thousands of wild desert men in Northern Africa—Es-Sayyid Ahmad Es-Sanûsi. During the Great War, he and his followers had given much trouble on the Western frontier of Egypt, where an expensive campaign was launched against them. For some months before his arrival in Mekka he had been living in exile in Turkey, and having been refused permission by the British authorities to travel to Jidda by the route of the Suez Canal, he had come across the desert from Damascus to El Jauf and Hâil, and from there to Mekka. Visiting him one day at his house on Jebel Abi Cubays, I found him instructing a company of his followers in the traditions of the Prophet.

Ahmad Es-Sanûsi is a man of medium height and

build. His face is long and heavy, and were it not for the fact that his eyes slope downwards towards their outer corners, he would present a perfectly Chinese appearance. His eyes are dull and almost expressionless, and he rarely smiles. He dresses entirely in white garments, and wears a large white turban. He is renowned, at any rate among those who know him but slightly, for the non-committal nature of his conversation. I asked him, among other matters, what was the latest news concerning a part of the territory occupied by his followers in Libya, over the possession of which Egypt and Italy were then disputing. This district included his own former headquarters of Jaghbûb Sîwas. He replied that he had no information as to what was happening, but that all things belong to God.

Ahmad Es-Sanûsi is the head of the Sanûsi Ikhwân, or brotherhood, which is a dervish order. Its members are found chiefly in Northern Africa, Egypt, and Western Arabia. The order possesses zâwiyas or meeting-houses in Mekka, El Medîna, Et-Tâif, Mina, and many other towns in Arabia, in addition to those in Egypt, Syria, and Northern Africa. Large numbers of the people of Mekka and El Medîna belong to the order, and so also do more than half of the Bedouins of the Hijâz—at any rate, nominally.

The dervish orders do not constitute sects. They each have a distinct system of supererogatory religious exercises, including the Zikr or invocation of God's Name. Needless to say, the Shaykh of a large dervish order possesses considerable power, which he may wield according to the dictates of his character.

Many of the religious shaykhs of Mekka are gentle old men, possessing a religious faith almost epic, such

as is rarely seen outside the Haramayn,* save perhaps in Christian monasteries. One of these gave me an amulet to preserve me from the plague.

Not all of these shaykhs are simple and genuine. Many of them indulge in practices which are opposed to their religion. Some of them, in addition to receiving remittances from Muhammadans in far countries for the purpose of performing the Hajj on behalf of a deceased person who was unable to perform it himself in his life-time, accept money to perform that rite for living persons. The former of these arrangements is allowed in Islâm, but the latter is opposed to the Korânic law. A shaykh may receive scores of fees each year for such pilgrimages by proxy. In that case he will pay a fraction of each fee sent him to separate substitutes, who each perform the Hajj in the name of a deceased person, whose friends have sent the fee.

Many impious practices are current in the matter of amulets and charms. For instance, there was a barren woman who desired to have issue, and her husband confided this matter to a shaykh who directed that the woman should be brought to him. This having been done, he requested her to disrobe, when he wrote a charm upon her abdomen. My informant assured me that this proceeding produced the desired result with gratifying promptitude. Such practices as this, however, are performed only by hypocritical and mercenary men, and are done in secret.

In cases of sickness it is generally believed that the most efficacious treatment is to write a Korânic verse on a piece of paper, then to soak the paper in a finjân of water until the ink is washed off, and finally for the sufferer to drink the inky water.

* The two Sanctuaries, i.e. Mekka and El Medîna.

The Korân yields the solution to every difficulty.

One of my acquaintances, by name Nâsir ibn 'Abdu, had painted on the door of his house the words "God is with the patient ones" (Allah ma' es-sâbirîn). Visiting him on one occasion, and having knocked at the door half a dozen times, I began to think this writing extremely applicable to myself. As a matter of fact, however, Nâsir was the unfortunate possessor of a quarrelsome wife, and he had written this Korânic excerpt on his door in order that, reading it whenever he entered his house, he might summon his powers of patience for the ensuing encounter.

XVII

DESCRIPTION OF THE HARAM OF MEKKA

"UNBELIEVERS," said Abdurrahmân, "cannot exist in Mekka. The dogs would tear them to pieces in the streets, or God would strike them with thunderbolts from the skies."

"Why do unbelievers come to Mekka?" I asked.

"They come," said Abdul Fattâh, "in order to throw poison into the well Zemzem, and thus kill all the Muslimîn in Mekka."

We were sitting in the mag'od one morning—Abdurrahmân, Abdul Fattâh, and I. The cronies had not yet made their appearance.

"There came an unbeliever in one of the past years . . . you remember, Amm Abdurrahmân?" said Abdul Fattâh, "but we knew it not. One day Allah sent a thunderbolt from the skies, and struck him dead. Then it was known that he was an unbeliever. For when his comrades came to wash him for burial, they found that he was not circumcised. He came with the Turkish troops, as a soldier; and he was that day on guard in Fort Filfil. There were others in the tower with him when the bolt fell, but he alone was slain, and the crack in the masonry of the tower is there till now."

"There is no power and no strength but in God . . . The High . . . The Tremendous!" said Abdurrahmân.

"There is no mention in the Korân of circumcision," I said.

"But it is wâjib" (obligatory), said Abdul Fattâh.

"No!" said Abdurrahmân. "Sunna muakkada (unequivocally the Prophet's example), and very desirable."

They believe that Muhammad was born without that which is removed in the operation of circumcision. The modern Muslims regard this matter as being of such importance that the majority of them think that a man cannot be a Muslim unless he is circumcised. This tradition of the excommunicating or outcasting of the uncircumcised has been handed down among the Semites from generation to generation since the days of Abraham. In Genesis, chapter xvii, God is reported to have addressed Abraham in the following words:—

> "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised manchild . . . that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

The observance of this rite thus became of paramount importance, being a direct command from God; and Jesus Christ himself conformed to it (Luke ii. 21).

Although the Muhammadans, in seeking the ordinances for their religious rites, go back no further than the time of Muhammad, yet they believe that Muhammad's mission was to perfect the true religion revealed to Adam; and subsequently brought ever nearer perfection by the successive progressions of Abraham, of Moses, of David, and of Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, then, the Muhammadan rite of circumcision takes its sanction, and its obligatory nature, from this passage in Genesis.

"Another time," said Abdul Fattâh, "some of the people found one with a book in his baggage, and on the binding was a picture of the cross. They called upon him to testify [that God is One, and Muhammad His Prophet], but he ran from the house and left them, and took refuge in the Hamîdîya."

"When was this?" I asked.

"It was in the days of the Turks," replied Abdul Fattâh, "and Sayyidna (the Sharîf of Mekka) commanded that he should be taken to Jidda, and there let go free. And the soldiers took him and buffeted him with their guns, and made him mount upon a camel. Wallah, I saw it with my eye! And when they came without the city, on the Jidda road, they made him dismount. Then they tied a rope to his neck, and dragged him along on his feet in this wise. And when they came in the midst of the wilderness they hit him with lead" (i.e. shot him).

Abd esh-Shukûr now entered the mag'od, and saluting us with peace, sat down. He had promised to accompany me to the Haram that morning in order to point out to me the various features of interest within the sacred walls.

"It may be that Allah extended the kâfir's life that he might become a Muslim," said he, as Abdul Fattâh kissed his hand. "Were it not for that, the dogs would have killed him before."

These dogs of Mekka are strange curs. They are of the usual type of pariah—half wolf, half lurcher. The predominating colour among them is a light brown; but white, dun, chocolate-brown, and black are also seen. They act as scavengers in the city, and each hâra has its proper pack. Dogs entering a strange quarter are promptly chased out again by the rightful

canine custodians of its rubbish-heaps. The main road, however, from Jarwal to El Maala, appears to be common ground, as I once observed a couple of dogs travel nearly the whole length of it without being molested by other dogs on the way. The adult Mekkans avoid touching these animals, as the dog is unclean; but some of the little boys discover a great joy in thwacking them with sticks or pelting them with stones. When hit, the dog does not usually run away. He simply curls himself up, tucks his tail in, and stands still, with his eye on his aggressor. Perhaps he will emit an occasional yelp. I have frequently seen a dog, lying asleep in the dust of the street, rudely awakened by blows from a heavy stick. The only response made by the philosophical mongrel was that he slowly raised his head and looked round enquiringly, as though "to be resolved" who it was that "so unkindly knocked." When the little boy had sated his lust, the dog lowered his head in a bored manner, and resumed his interrupted repose. If a walker stumbles against a sleeping dog, the latter makes no effort to get out of the way. It calmly lies its ground, and leaves the walker to make his own arrangements about further progress. Some of the Mekkans make a regular practice of throwing out food to the dogs. I never saw one of these animals near any gate of the Haram, though I have frequently seen cats within the sacred Mosque. Dogs may not be killed in Mekka, as they are protected by the law of sanctuary.

As the cronies began to arrive, Abd esh-Shukûr and I rose to go to the Mosque.

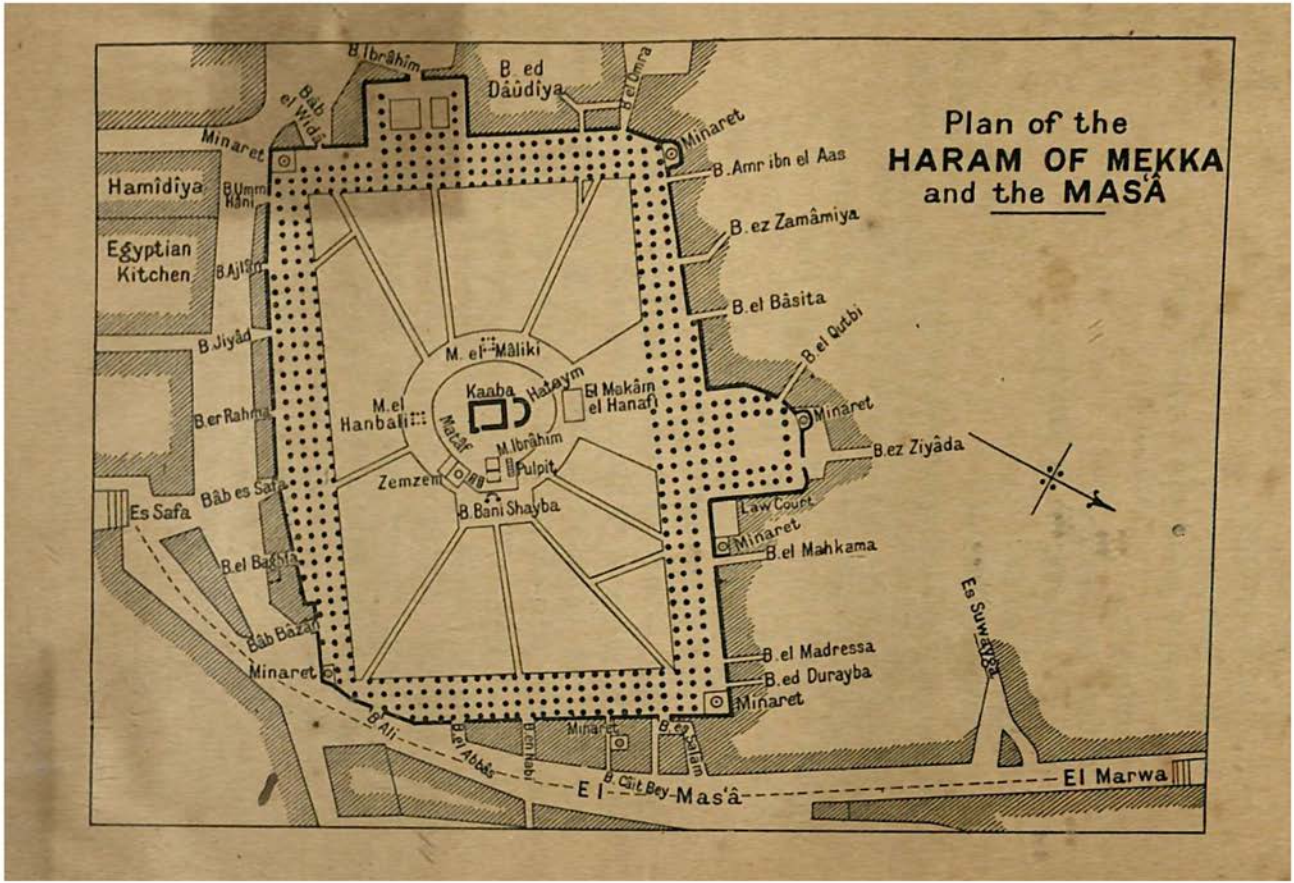
The inner sanctuary, or Haram, of Mekka was originally a small open space about the Kaaba, surrounded by the houses of the Curaysh. It comprised no greater area than the space which is now known as

El Matâf. In course of time the Mosque was enlarged by successive Khalîfas, and about it a wall was built. The Haram was built as it now stands by order of the Turkish Sultân Sulaymân in 979 A.H. (1570 A.D.).

Its boundaries form an irregular parallelogram, the average interior length of which is 540 feet, and the average breadth 365 feet. At the middle of the north-western side of the quadrangle, an additional space projects beyond the parallelogram. This space is in the form of a rough square, and measures some 95 feet from its south-western to its north-eastern side, and 85 feet from north-west to south-east. It is called Ziyâdat Dâr en-Nadwa, and was added to the Mosque in 281 A.H. by the Abbasside Khalîfa El Muatadhad.

At the south-western side of the Mosque there is a second projection, which is known as Ziyâdat Bâb Ibrâhîm. This forms a parallelogram, 85 feet long from south-east to north-west by 55 feet in the opposite dimension. It was added to the Mosque in 376 A.H. by order of the Abbasside Jaafar El Mugtadar.

The great stone walls which enclose the Haram are 25 feet in height, and are very thick. Within them, on every side of the quadrangle, extend cloisters, which vary in width between 35 and 40 feet. The columns which support the roof of these cloisters are said to be some 550 in number. More than half of them are of white or veined marble; mostly plain cylindrical shafts, tapering slightly; and one or two of them are spirally or vertically fluted. One of the columns opposite the Hataym is of a reddish porphyry, and there are two of red granite. The remainder of the cylindrical columns are of grey granite. The diameter of these pillars varies between eighteen and twenty inches at the base, and many of them are


Plan of the
HARAM OF MEKKA
and the MASÂ
B. Ibrâhîm
B. ed Dâûdiya
Bâb el Widâ
Minaret
Hamîdiya
B. Umm Hâni
Egyptian Kitchen
B. Ajlân
B. Jiyâd
B. er Rahma
Bâb es Safa
Es Safa
B. el Bâsha
Bâb Bâzân
Minaret
B. Ali
B. el Abbâs
B. en Nabi
Minaret
B. Cait Bey
B. Eslam
El Mas'â
El Marwa
Es Suwayqa
B. el Madressa
B. ed Durayba
Minaret
Law Court
Minaret
B. el Mahkama
B. ez Ziyâda
Minaret
B. el Qutbi
B. el Bâsita
B. ez Zamâmiya
B. Amr ibn el Aas
Minaret
B. el Umra
M. el Mâliki
Kaaba
Hatâym
El Makâm el Hanafi
M. el Hanbali
Mataf
M. Ibrâhîm
Pulpit
Zemzem
B. Bani Shayba

strengthened with iron bands. They are mounted on circular bases, and the capitals are mostly of Saracenic stalactite design.

These columns extend round the quadrangle in a triple row, though in some parts, where the wall of the Mosque bulges out of a straight line, they are four deep. Every fourth column is octagonal, and is built of blocks of the fine grey stone of Jebel el Kaaba. These octagonal pillars are coloured with alternate bands of red, yellow, and blue paint, but they are whitened to a height of eight feet from the ground. The arches which the columns support are also painted in this manner, and the inner sides of the domes which they carry are whitened. The ground beneath the cloisters is paved with roughly hewn blocks of Mekkan granite cemented together. This pavement presents an uneven cobbled surface which is very tiring to the bare feet.

In the Haram wall there are 24 public gates. Some of these possess only one opening, or doorway, while others possess more than one. The following list will explain the position and form of each gate. In it the principal gates are marked with an asterisk.

Gates in the north-eastern wall:—	No. of Openings
1. Bâb es-Salâm*	3
2. Bâb Câit Bey	1
3. Bâb en-Nabi or el Janâiz*	2
4. Bâb el 'Abbâs*	3
5. Bâb Ali*	3
Gates in the south-eastern wall:—	
6. Bâb Bâzân*	2
7. Bâb el Baghla*	2
8. Bâb es-Safâ*	5

	No. of Openings
9. Bâb er-Rahma*	2
10. Bâb Jiyâd*	2
11. Bâb 'Ajlân*	2
12. Bâb Umm Hâni*	2
Gates in the south-western wall:—	
13. Bâb el Widâ*	2
14. Bâb Ibrâhîm*	1
15. Bâb ed-Dâûdîya	1
16. Bâb el 'Omra*	1
Gates in the north-western wall:—	
17. Bâb 'Amr ibn el 'Aas*	1
18. Bâb ez-Zamâmiya	1
19. Bâb el Bâsita	1
20. Bâb el Qutbi	1
21. Bâb ez-Ziyâda*	3
22. Bâb el Mahkama	1
23. Bâb el Madressa	1
24. Bâb ed-Durayba	1
Total number of doorways	44

Bâb es-Salâm is the gate through which pilgrims usually enter the Mosque for the first time. Bâb Câit Bey is named after a Sultân of Egypt who built the minaret above it. Bâb en-Nabi is the gate through which, or from the direction of which, the Prophet used to enter the Mosque, when coming from Khadîja's house. It also bears the name Bâb el Janâiz, because the dead are carried out of it on their way to be buried in the Maala. Bâb el 'Abbâs is named after the prophet's uncle, whose house still stands opposite to it in the Masâ. On the inside surface of the Haram

wall, between Bâb el 'Abbâs and Bâb Ali, the Name of God, and the names of Muhammad and the first four khalîfas, Abu Bakr, Umar, Othmân, and Ali, are painted in the thuluthi script with the alifs* nearly four feet long. Bâb Bâzân is so named because it faces towards the bâzân in Jiyâd. Bâzân is the name given to the small reservoirs or tanks which are connected with the aqueduct of 'Ayn Zubayda. There are seven of these in different parts of Mekka, and also one at each of 'Arafa, Muzdalfa, and Mina. From Bâb es-Safâ the pilgrim leaves the Haram in order to perform the saaya or running, which is started from the hill of Safâ opposite. Bâb 'Ajlân is named after a sharîf of that name, who built a school adjacent to it. Bâb Umm Hâni is named after a daughter of Abu Tâlib and sister of the fourth Khalîfa, Ali, who possessed a house at this point. The ground on which this house once stood is now part of the Haram. Bâb el Widâ, or the Gate of Leave-taking, is so named because the pilgrims leave the Mosque for the last time by this way when departing for Jidda. Bâb Ibrâhîm takes its name from a tailor who once plied his trade near it. Through Bâb el 'Omra the pilgrim, who has journeyed out to the Haram limits in order to assume the ihrâm, enters the Mosque to perform the rites of the 'Omra or Lesser Pilgrimage. Bâb 'Amr ibn el 'Aas bears the name of the Muhammadan conqueror of Egypt. Bâb el Qutbi is named after the Mekkan historian, Qutb ed-Dîn, who lived in a house in the lane without. Bâb ez-Ziyâda, or the Gate of the Increase, takes its name from the fact that it leads to that part of the Mosque which was added to the main quadrangle. This gate is sometimes called Bâb es-

* Alif is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet.

Suwayga, after the market-place of that name to which it gives access. Bâb el Mahkama is adjacent to the Law Court, as its name implies.

In addition to the 24 gates enumerated, there is a doorway in the wall between Bâb Ibrâhîm and Bâb ed-Dâûdîya. This gives access to a school, called Madressat As-Sagâf, and during school hours it remains open, forming an additional means of egress into the street beyond. There is also a small door close to the right-hand side of Bâb Ibrâhîm. This admits to a disused hospice (rubât). It is known as Bâb Ibn 'Agîl, and I never saw it open. A number of other little doors lead to the minarets, the caves of the Zemzemis, or into private chambers which have windows looking into the Mosque from beneath the roof of the cloisters. These chambers belong to Mekkan families, or are held in mortmain for the benefit of the Mosque, and they are often rented to wealthy hâjjis for the pilgrimage season. All of the principal gates have Korânic or other inscriptions, some in the Kufic character, painted or chiselled upon the outer aspects of the lintels or in the spandrels. The arches of some of the gates describe a plain curve, while others are obtusely pointed. Every entrance is fitted with wooden doors, but the principal gates remain open all night—only one leaf of their double doors being closed.

The ground-level outside the Mosque walls has risen, in the course of the centuries, far above the original level of the valley's bottom. The true surface of the latter is now visible only within the Mosque walls. Without the walls, the ground-level is now, in some places, as much as ten feet above that within. At other points it is no more than seven feet higher. In consequence of this variation in ground-levels the gates of

the Haram are approached from within by means of flights of deep stone steps. These flights of steps are longer than is necessary to reach the higher level, because the thresholds of the gates are raised, in most cases some three feet above the upper ground-level. Three or four steps on the outside of the threshold lead down to the ground. These raised thresholds act as dams to prevent the sudden floods, which sweep down the valley, from pouring into the Mosque.

One or two of the gates are on a level with the Mosque floor, and in such cases the necessary flight of steps connecting the two ground-levels is situated outside the gate. In all such cases the gate leads into a narrow lane—a mere passage-way between the houses—in which it is as easy to construct a dam as it is to construct one in a doorway. The low-level gates of the Haram are Bâb es-Salâm, Bâb Câit Bey, Bâb ed-Dâûdîya, Bâb el Mahkama, Bâb el Madressa, and Bâb ed-Durayba. Bâb es-Salâm requires special attention. This gate gives access to the sûk of the booksellers and stationers, which is a narrow street, some eighty yards long, with little shop-recesses on either side. The street remains on the same level as the Mosque, but at its further end, where it joins the Masâ, a flight of stone steps takes one to the higher level. A further point of interest connected with Bâb es-Salâm is that outside it, at a distance of five or six paces, the street is completely blocked from side to side by a long narrow slab of granite, set edgeways in the ground. This forms an obstacle some two feet high. The Mekkans say this is the idol El-Lât (mentioned in the Korân, chapter *The Star*), which was formerly situated at Et-Tâif, where it was worshipped by the pagan Arabs. They say that the stone was placed in its present position by

some of the Prophet's companions, so that the Muslimîn, entering or leaving the Mosque by this gate, might perpetually subject the former "god" to the indignity of being walked over. There is no inscription on the stone nor any carving, and I have no doubt that the Mekkan tale is merely a fable, especially as the people of Et-Tâif point to a broken stone in that town as being the remains of the idol El-Lât. It may, however, that several idols of this name existed.

The Haram is crowned with seven minarets of whitened stone. At its western angle is the minaret of Bâb el 'Omra, which was originally built by El Mansûr in 139 A.H. The minaret of Bâb ez-Ziyâda stands beside the gate of that name. The minaret of Es-Sulaymânîya overtops the domes of the Law Court; while at the northern angle of the Mosque stands the minaret of Bâb es-Salâm, built in 168 A.H. These four spires are all on the north-western side of the Haram. On its north-eastern side is the minaret of Câit Bey, built in 880 A.H.; while at its eastern and southern angles respectively stand the minarets of Bâb Ali and Bâb el Widâ.

Noticing old Hasan the Zemzemi one morning, applying kohl to his eyes with the aid of a match-stick, I seated myself beside him at the door of his cave, and asked him how it was that a minaret came to be built so late as 880 A.H. when there already existed six spires. He told me that Câit Bey, Sultân of Egypt, on coming to Mekka to perform the Hajj in that year, suddenly took the idea of building a minaret near a school which he had founded, adjacent to Bâb es-Salâm. He gave orders that one was to be built before his return from 'Arafa. The time at their disposal being short, his slaves constructed a wooden tower on the roof of a house

near the school, and upon the Sultân's return there was the minaret with the muaddin in it, calling to prayer. Subsequently the wooden tower was replaced by the present stone structure, but the minaret still projects above the roof of a private house, of which it appears to form a part.

Immediately before the five times of prayer, the chief of the muaddins takes up his position on the roof of the building which covers the well Zemzem. Upon the arrival of the appointed hour he begins to chant the adân. At once the seven muaddins stationed in the minarets take up his cry, and follow closely one after the other, like the singers of a part-song.

Beyond the cloisters, the open quadrangle of the Mosque is strewn with a coarse gravel, which consists of the stones which have been thrown at the "devils" at Mina during the Pilgrimage. A number of stone footpaths extend across this gravelled space, and connect the pavement of the cloisters with the circular pavement which surrounds the Matâf. These footpaths are eight in number, with three subsidiary pathways; while opposite the Hataym there is a broad fan-shaped pavement, varying in breadth between fifty-five feet and a hundred and thirty feet.

On the edge of the granite pavement* which surrounds the Matâf, stands an isolated stone arch known as Bâb Bani Shayba. This is situated opposite to the door of the Kaaba, and in the other direction it faces the Haram gate called Bâb en-Nabi. The Bâb Bani Shayba stands on the site of the entrance of the original Haram. The width between the two columns which

* This pavement has a single step in its middle, and may be compared to two very broad steps, the outer of which is eight or nine inches higher than the inner.

support the arch is some fourteen feet, and the apex, which is slightly pointed, is some twenty feet above the ground. The lintel is inscribed with a Korânic verse. Pilgrims invariably step on the Matâf through this arch on the occasion of their first entry into the Mosque.

Between the Kaaba and the Bâb Bani Shayba is a small domed building, which stands on the marble pavement of the Matâf at a distance of forty feet from the Kaaba. (The Matâf sends out a square projection in this place.) This erection, which consists of six small pillars, some eight feet in height, supporting a domed roof and connected by ornamental iron-work railings, contains a square object with a pyramidal top, which is covered with an embroidered pall of green silk. It is some five feet square at its base. This object is a framework which covers the stone called El Hajar el Asad. When Abraham rebuilt the Kaaba he stood upon this stone, and the impress of his feet is said to be visible in it still, though I never met anybody who had actually seen the stone. The ground covered by the building is some ten feet square; and the place, the stone, and the building are usually referred to as Makâm Ibrâhîm (Abraham's Standing-place). After performing the towâf, the devotee prays a prayer of two prostrations, either behind the Makâm Ibrâhîm or in the Hijr Ismayl (the space within the Hataym).

To the right of the Makâm Ibrâhîm, as one faces the Kaaba, stands a magnificent marble pulpit. This is constructed in the form of a long narrow flight of steps, enclosed on either side with a low wall, the top of which forms a hand-rail. At the bottom of the steps is a small door, which is kept locked save at midday on Fridays; and at the top is a little platform surmounted

by a turret, the pointed roof of which rises nearly as high as the Kaaba. The whole is of marble, chiselled with decorative designs and inscriptions, and the roof of the turret is gilded. This pulpit was presented in 956 A.H. by the Turkish Sultân Sulaymân.

To the left of the Makâm Ibrâhîm stands the building which protects the well Zemzem. This is a small square erection, the sides of which face towards the cardinal points of the compass. In its eastern wall there is a doorway, and entering this the visitor finds himself in a small chamber measuring some fifteen feet in each dimension. The walls of this chamber are lined with marble of various colours, and in its centre stands a beautiful massive parapet of the same stone, circular in form, and shaped like a huge squat vase. This is the orifice of the Well. It is some seven feet in diameter and four and a half feet high, and is surmounted by an iron framework, in the top of which are pulleys for the bucket ropes. An iron grating at one side of the chamber protects a marble tank within an aperture in the wall. This tank is kept filled with water from the Well, so that the hâjjis may drink at any time, whether the water-drawers are present or not.

The Muslims believe that the water of Zemzem never abates in volume, but it is a historical fact that the Well became almost dry in 214 A.H., after which it was deepened by order of El Mamûn. On the night of the 14th of Shaabân in every year, the waters of El Kowthar, a river of Paradise, are believed to flow into the Well. The volume of water then rises to its mouth. The Mekkans recount the story of an Indian pilgrim who, from pious motives, jumped into the Well and died of repletion. A Jidda pearl-diver was sent down

in order to recover his body, and upon coming up again he reported that the Well was fed by three subterranean streams—one flowing from the direction of Bâb es-Salâm; one from Bâb Jiyâd; and the other from Bâb en-Nabi. The Muslims believe that Zemzem water is the best medicine for every ailment. Its taste is faintly brackish, and its effect slightly purgative. When taken from the Well it is lukewarm.

The Zemzem building consists of two compartments —the well-chamber, and a closet in which are situated the stairs which give access to the roof, and in a part of which are kept brooms and other utensils. The roof of the building is a favourite position for prayer. A circular aperture, eighteen inches in diameter, in this roof gives ventilation to the well-chamber below.

On the granite pavement, opposite the Hataym, stands a small pavilion raised on pillars. It is reached by means of a flight of wooden steps, and is some twenty feet long by fifteen feet wide. It is called El Makâm el Hanafî (the Hanafî Standing-place), because beneath it the Hanafî imâm stands when leading the prayers. In the upper storey, the muballigh* takes up his position.

The Makâm el Hanafî stands on or near the site of the old council-house of the Curaysh—called Dâr en-Nadwa—which now no longer exists.

The imâm of the Shâfi'îs stands behind the Makâm Ibrâhîm, and his muballigh is stationed on the roof of the Zemzem building.

Opposite the south-western wall of the Kaaba stands a little pyramidal roof, supported on four posts. This is

* The muballigh repeats the words of the imâm in a loud singing voice, in order that the congegation in all parts of the Mosque may hear them.

the Makâm el Mâlikî, the standing-place of the imâm of that school. The fourth makâm, that of the Hanbalî school, stands opposite the south-eastern side of the Kaaba. It is similar in construction to the Mâlikî Makâm.

In the Mosque services one imâm leads the whole of the congregation, who are ranged in circular rows round the Kaaba. Thus it happens that some of the worshippers face the imâm, while others are behind him, and others on either hand. The imâms of the four schools lead the services by rotation.

Between Zemzem and the Makâm Ibrâhîm stand two broad wooden staircases mounted on wheels. One of these is plated with silver, and the other is handsomely carved. They were presented to the Mosque by Indian princes, and are used for the purpose of entering the Kaaba. One of them is wheeled up to the door of the House whenever a prince or other prominent personage desires to enter. At other times they are not used, as it would be difficult for the Shaybi to collect his toll if the rabble had a broad staircase up which to swarm in their hundreds. He prefers to leave it to his "youths" to hook up the promising candidates, while the ineligible mass does duty for the staircase.

Round the inner edge of the granite pavement extends a line of iron posts, some twelve feet in height. These support cross-bars, from which are suspended a number of glass-globe lamps—seven lamps between each two uprights. At present electric globes also depend from these cross-bars, and also from cross-bars between the columns which form the outer line of the colonnade of the cloisters. This electric system, which was installed by King Husayn, is worked by an internal combustion engine situated in a building in the Jiyâd.

Two small buildings, called El Kubbatayn, mentioned by Burckhardt as being used as store-cupboards, no longer exist in the Mosque.

The religious service of the Mosque, and the menial service necessary for its upkeep and preservation, are performed by a large staff of employees. At the head of these is the Nâib el Haram. In Turkish times this official was appointed by the Sultân, and frequently held the rank of Pasha. He is designated as Nâib (deputy) because the governor of Mekka is nominally the chief, or shaykh, of the Haram. At present the Nâib el Haram is appointed by Ibn Sa'ûd himself.

The second officer, in order of precedence, is the Opener of God's House, who is always the head of the family of Bani Shayba. A Shaybi is never appointed Nâib el Haram, and nobody save a Shaybi may be appointed Opener of the House.

The Nâib is assisted by two or three lieutenants or supervisors, and under the latter there is a great host of lesser personages and actual performers of work. This work, though menial in itself, is performed with pride by the Mosque servants, for it is service performed directly for God about his Holy House. The Mosque servants have varied in number from time to time, according to the political situation, but there have been as many as eight hundred employed at one time. During the lean months of the Wahhâbî invasion, when Mekka was cut off from her usual sources of revenue, there were less than half that number attached to the Haram service. Formerly there were more than a hundred imâms and preachers, a hundred teachers of religious subjects, fifty muaddins, and hundreds of sweepers, lamp-cleaners, door-keepers, and water-drawers for the well Zemzem. Every one

of these people received a stipend from the endowment funds of the Mosque.

The care of the Matâf is the peculiar duty of a corps of fifty black eunuchs, who also act as the Mosque police. They are African negroes. They are known as Aghas, or, vulgarly, as Tawâshîs, and their chief takes rank after the Shaybi in order of precedence. The Aghas wear a special form of dress, which includes a jubba of any colour, with very long loose sleeves which hang down to the wearer's knees, completely concealing his hands. They wear very large white turbans, and also broad sashes, the ends of which hang down from the waist to below the knee. They usually carry each a long staff. Several of the Aghas are always present on the Matâf, and when engaged in that duty they wear white jubbas. Upon the smallest piece of dirt making its appearance on the marble pavement, two of them quickly take up a large metal jug of water, a metal bowl, a broom, a shovel, a pair of iron tongs, and a sponge, and proceed at once to remove the pollution. If this be a piece of solid matter—mud, gravel, paper, or similar object—one of the Aghas picks it up with the iron tongs, and drops it into the metal bowl. Then, one of them taking the broom, and the other the shovel, they sweep up any remaining particles. This accomplished, they pour water on the spot where the dirt has lain, and clean it thoroughly with the aid of the sponge. Almost constantly several of these eunuchs are to be seen sweeping the Matâf with long-fibred flapping brooms.

The reason why eunuchs are specially employed on the Matâf, and for police purposes is, that in the event of a disturbance occurring in which women are concerned, or in the event of a woman appearing on the

Matâf in unseemly attire or in a state of uncleanness, they may handle such offenders and expel them without impropriety, as they are not really men in the full sense of the word. It is a shameful thing for a man to touch a woman who is not his wife or near relative, and in the Haram of Mekka such an act would be doubly shameful, as the majority of the learned say that all actions, good or bad, performed on that holy ground assume a greatly increased significance. What would be wicked in Cairo is thrice wicked in Mekka: what would be a mere display of bad taste in Bagdad would be an outrage in Mekka. Similarly a meritorious action is much more admirable at Mekka than elsewhere.

The first Khalîfa to institute the corps of Aghas at Mekka was the Abbâside, Abu Jaafar el Mansûr (136 to 158 A.H.), the builder of Bagdad. Many of the eunuchs have been presented to the Mosque by pious princes or other wealthy Muhammadans, but since slavery was officially abolished in the Turkish Empire, it has become the custom of the chief of the Aghas to buy likely boys with the aid of funds known as waqfs (religious bequests or endowments) which are placed at his disposal. The unfortunate youngsters are usually operated on before being sent out of Africa, as owing to the hazardous nature of the mutilation, the chief of the Aghas will not purchase them until they have safely undergone it.

The Aghas receive a very large income from waqfs (designated Owqâf el Aghawât), settled upon them by Muhammadans in many parts of the world. Their income from the neighbourhood of Basra is, or was, particularly large, and as their dues from that source were not forwarded to them in the year of my visit to Mekka, owing to the stoppage of the Hajj, one of them

was despatched on a journey across Arabia to Basra in order to collect them. The Aghas expend their incomes in the upkeep of expensive establishments which, strange as it may appear, include wives and slave-girls, in addition to male attendants. They all live in the quarter of El Hajla, at the junction of Sûk es-Saghîr and El Misfala; and here the young boys live together in a large house, where they are instructed by the elders in religious matters and in their proper duties.

Owing to the official standing of the Chief Agha, he and his corps are treated with great veneration by the more simple hâjjis. I saw a eunuch, sitting on a raised place beneath the cloisters near Bâb es-Safâ, which is their favourite praying-place, summon an Indian hâjji with a lordly gesture and a brief word. The hâjji hastened to him, and grovelling on his knees, kissed the black hand of the Agha and awaited his commands in awed subservience. The middle-class Mekkans also invariably rise when addressed by an Agha, and treat him in every way as a superior.

The Aghas are nearly all repulsively ugly. They are usually of a startlingly emaciated appearance, tall, and terrifyingly bony. One or two of them, however, are handsome, and all exhibit an expression of supermundane aloofness. An Agha is usually followed by his slave, who picks up his sandals as soon as he discards them at the door of the Mosque, and remains at hand to await his master's orders. Technically, the Aghas belong to the Haram as part of its endowment, having been purchased with money of the waqfs, or presented as a waqf, and they could not buy their freedom if they wished to do so. They are God's slaves, and cannot be manumitted by man, nor leave the Mosque service for any other work. The fact that they

possess property of their own, however, to the ownership of which no man may dispute their absolute right, proves that they are not as ordinary slaves, whose masters own, not only their persons, but everything they possess, no matter how they may have acquired it. In the ultimate resort, ownership of the Aghas would probably be adjudged as being vested in the Prophet's vice-regent—the Khalîfa; and through his favour an Agha might doubtless compass his own manumission. But apart from its sanctity, so exalted is their station in Mekka, as compared with any position they might reasonably expect to achieve elsewhere, that it is practically certain that the thought of leaving their present service never occurs to them as a rational possibility.

Mekkan women very seldom pray in the Haram, save on Thursday evening. On that day a number of them usually enter the Mosque just before sunset, and having performed the towâf, they congregate near Bâb Ali in order to join in the sunset prayer. After the prayer, those who were too late to perform the towâf before sunset accomplish that act of devotion. Then they leave the Mosque without tarrying. The foreign women who come to perform the Pilgrimage spend more time in the Mosque, as most of them perform the towâf every morning and evening. The Malay women, particularly, like to sit under the colonnade, and let their dark languid eyes dwell on the sunlit Kaaba in luxurious somnolence. The Wahhâbîs discourage the presence of women in the Mosque, even at prayer time. They do not obstruct female hâjjis,* but in the months when Mekka was empty of hâjjis, I have seen the Aghas, and also special guards from the Sharta, or

* The feminine form of the word "hâjji" is hâjja.

City police, drive Mekkan women from the Haram with blows of their sticks. This could only be by order of the religious chiefs of the Ikhwân, whom Ibn Sa'ûd himself dares not oppose on matters of religious practice.

XVIII

PLACES OF VISITATION IN AND NEAR MEKKA.

THE Prophet's birthplace (Mûlid en-Nabi) is chief among the places in and about the Holy City which form the objects of pious visitation. This is situated in the ravine called Shiab Ali, near Sûk el-Layl. It stands in one corner of an open space, some forty yards square, between the ancient houses, and consisted, before the advent of the Wahhâbîs, of a small square mosque surmounted by a dome and flanked by a short minaret. A doorway in the north-eastern wall disclosed a flight of steps leading down to the floor of the building, some five feet below the level of the street. The mosque is divided by a wall into two chambers, each about thirty feet long by fifteen feet wide, and the right-hand one of these is again divided into two chambers of unequal size. The more westerly of these, which is also the larger, stands on the site of the room in which Muhammad is said to have been born. A circular hole, nearly a foot in diameter, in the marble floor is shown as being the actual spot on which the Lady Amina gave birth to the future prophet. In the western angle of this chamber stands the mihrâb.

The Wahhâbîs, true to their principles, demolished the dome and minaret of this building, and removed draperies and other ornaments from it. They also prohibited the hereditary custodians from sitting at its doorway to receive alms. Before their occupation of

the Holy City, this placid occupation had furnished the principal source of income for a family of Sharîfs. Now, whenever the Mûlid en-Nabi was mentioned in a gathering of Mekkans, faces grew grave, and here and there among the company a bitter curse would be uttered against the Nejders. It became a point of duty for everybody who passed near the Mûlid to drive away any dogs which happened to be in its vicinity, for all knew that the custodians no longer dared to guard it, and the thought that the unclean beasts should enter and defile that sacred place filled Mekkans and hâjjis alike with shame and anger. It was dangerous to stand and look long at this or any other sacred site or building, for a passing Wahhâbî, seeing one so occupied, would be quite capable of laying about him with his camel-stick, calling down curses the while upon those who make supplication to the Prophet. The Wahhâbîs would have entirely prohibited visitation of the Mûlid, but the fact of its being a mosque enabled Abdul Azîz to prevail upon his 'ulemâ to persuade the wild men that there was nothing unlawful in its being used for the purpose of prayer and meditation. Consequently they left the gateway in the half-ruined walls unobstructed, and the Sultân gained credit with them for having allowed the dome to be demolished, and credit with the foreign hâjjis for protecting the place from complete demolition.

So violently have the Wahhâbîs re-acted against the lax Muslim custom of addressing supplications to Muhammad, that the less informed among them seem to an observer to be in danger of denying to him that honour which the 'ulemâ of every school admit to be his due. I have sat with Wahhâbîs who, when the Prophet's name was mentioned, have failed to join with

the remainder of the company in saying "God bless him and give him peace," though this is commanded in the Korân. The Wahhâbîs are for ever repeating the first part of the Confession of Faith—"There is no god but The God"; but for every score of repetitions of this they hardly once say the second part—"Muhammad is the Prophet of God."

In the Masâ one day I saw an excited crowd close-packed around a fierce-looking Wahhâbî and a Mekkan. Upon making enquiry, I learnt that these two were disputing about Muhammad. The Mekkan had addressed a thoughtless word to the Prophet, saying simply "O Prophet of Allah," as many of the Muslims do when they are tired or worried or wonder-struck. Now, I heard the Wahhâbî say, "This my stick is better than Muhammad. Why better? . . . Because Muhammad is dead and gone, and can profit nothing; but this my stick has a use. It is more useful to me than is Muhammad.' The Mekkan crowd burst into shocked murmurs of disgust, mixed with cursing. A fight seemed imminent when some of the Sultân's slaves approaching caused them to disperse.

Seldom do the Wahhâbîs, in speaking of Muhammad, call him "the Prophet" or "Allah's Messenger."

The birthplace of Fâtima (Mûlid Sitna Fâtima) is situated in the Zugâg el Hajar, which is in the quarter lying on the opposite side of Sûk el-Layl to Shiab Ali. This site is some thirty yards square, and is entered from Zugâg el Hajar through a small doorway in a stone wall. It belonged to Muhammad's wife, Khadîja, and in it were born their children, of whom the Lady Fâtima is the best known. The ground inside the enclosure is four or five feet below the level of the street. On the left-hand side is a large room which was

used as an audience chamber or mag'od; while on the right are three smaller rooms, the largest of which is that in which Fâtima was born. Of the remaining two, one was the private chamber of Muhammad and his wife, and the other was his praying-place. In the last, the Prophet received many of the revelations which compose the Korân. On one side of it there is a small depression in the ground, at which Muhammad is said to have performed his ceremonial ablutions. Behind these chambers lies an open courtyard extending the whole breadth of the enclosure. In this, Khadîja, who was a wealthy merchant, is said to have kept stores of merchandise.

The Prophet's praying-place and the birthplace of Fâtima were covered by small domes before the Wahhâbî occupation, but at the time of my visit these had been demolished, and lay in ruins. The entrance to the enclosure was blocked up with stones and mud, leaving only a small space at the top, through which the interior was visible. Near this doorway is the stone which spoke to the Prophet. It is built into the wall at a height of seven feet from the ground, but is at present indistinguishable from the other stones composing the wall, as the whole has been whitened by the obliterating hands of the Wahhâbîs. Another stone near-by is said to have supported the Prophet when he was fatigued.

Dâr el Argam, or Dâr el Khayzarân, is a house near Es-Safâ in which the Prophet and his few followers used to meet in secret for the purpose of prayer, at the beginning of his mission. It consists of two chambers, but as the door was kept locked by order of the Wahhâbîs I was unable to do more than obtain an unsatisfactory view of the interior by peering through the iron bars of a window.

A number of other birthplaces of prominent companions of the Prophet are also visited by the hâjjis. Most of these have small mosques built over them, but nearly all of them have been partially destroyed by the Nejders.

The famous cemetery El Maala occupies twenty or thirty acres of ground at the northern end of the Mekkan valley. It is divided into two sections by the road which passes over the westward hill into the valley of El Hujûn. Each half of the graveyard is surrounded by stone walls, some five feet in height.

Here, according to tradition, are buried the Prophet's mother, Amina; his wife, Khadîja; and his ancestors, Abd Manâf and Abdul Muttalib, together with a number of the famous early Muslims. The mutawwifs have invented long supplications and pious exercises to be said at these tombs. These being outside the Prophet's practice are termed bid'a (innovation). The few tolerant men among the Wahhâbîs term these exercises "undesirable innovation," while the many intolerant Wahhâbîs call them rites of polytheism, alleging that those who practise them are according to the dead a degree of importance which pertains to God alone.

The tombs of these personages were formerly crowned by small but handsome domes, but these, without exception, have now been demolished, together with most of the tombstones. The guardians of each tomb, who formerly derived considerable incomes from the hâjjis, now no longer dare to spread their handkerchiefs on the ground to receive the pilgrims' alms. The cemetery is silent and deserted, save when a funeral party quickly bears in one more departed Muslim to join the millions whose dust lies there.

As far as I could gather, the deaths among pilgrims in Mekka during a healthy year, that is to say when the Hajj occurs neither in the season of greatest heat nor in the rainy season, and when no plague breaks out, number about two per cent. When the Hajj falls in the hottest season or in that of the rains, the proportion may be as high as five per cent; and when plague strikes the Holy City it may be anything. Plague excepted, the most fatal conditions in Mekka are those which obtain during the rains. The hâjjis and the Mekkans alike support dry heat in Mekka far better than they support humidity. In the wet season, the mortality among the natives of Mekka, men, women and children collectively, is probably about three or four per thousand every month. In addition to this, the mortality among newly-born infants is colossally high. At a time when there were no hâjjis in Mekka, and when, owing to the exodus of the city's inhabitants as a result of the Wahhâbî invasion, the resident population was as low as probably 60,000* souls, I have myself counted nine funerals in one day.

It might appear mysterious that so many could have been buried in so small a space, particularly as the Muslims bury only one body in each grave, and not half a dozen on top of one another as is done in Christian countries; and in view of the fact that a considerable part of the Maala is taken up by small stone-walled enclosures which are private to a number of Sharîfian families. I put this matter to the sitters in the coffee-yard at Birka one evening.

"Feel the ground under you, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Sabri.

* The normal resident population is probably rather more than double this number.

I leaned down and placed my hand upon the ground, while all watched intently.

"Is it not hot?" asked Sabri.

"Yes, a little," I replied, for indeed it was not cold.

"You may dig down as far as you like," he said, "and the earth becomes hotter as ever you go deeper."

"Strange!" I said.

"Wallah!" said they, "the earth of Mekka is hot."

"This is the reason that the dead in the Maala never become overcrowded," said Sabri. "The earth is hot; and, with the heat, the bodies of the Muslimîn pass away into dust, and God alone knows what is the explanation of it."

"His glory and greatness!" they murmured.

"Not so, Amm Abdurrahmân?" cried Sabri.

"Ay, wallah!" replied Abdurrahmân, "and every six months they rake out the graves, and they find no bones . . . only dust; and then they bury the newly-dead in that same place."

"And on the Day of Resurrection, He will raise up all mankind though their bodies shall have become scattered dust," said Yûsef.

"Verily we belong to God, and unto Him we shall surely return," they quoted piously.

Jebel Abi Cubays, which is believed by the Muslims to be the first mountain created, is regularly visited by the hâjjis, and is usually one of the first points of interest about which they enquire. Soon after my arrival in Mekka I climbed this hill, in company with my host. Having reached the summit, Abdurrahmân and I sat down to view the Haram lying below us in the valley bottom. My companion quietly reversed an old discarded sandal which lay, sole uppermost, near us.

This he did because it was "improper that a shoe should be turned upward to the Great Throne of God." In the Mosque, sandals are placed sole to sole on the ground, so that an exposed sole shall neither defile the sacred ground nor be uncovered to the sky.

Presently a man of a Syrian appearance came up from behind and, saluting us with peace, sat down beside us.

"There is the Kaaba below us," said Abdurrahmân; "mountains on our right hand, mountains on our left hand, mountains in front of us, and the houses of Mekka in the ravines between them."

The Syrian was silent, seeming sad. Presently he said: "O God! bless our Lord Muhammad, and his family, and his companions."

"What is wrong with you?" asked Abdurrahmân.

"Not a thing," said the Syrian. Then he said again: "O God! bless our Lord Muhammad, and his family, and his companions."

"What is the matter, O my uncle?" demanded Abdurrahmân again.

At last the Syrian said in a tone of dejection: "The Land of Egypt is wide and fruitful. The Land of Shâm is wide and fruitful. The Land of Turkey is wide and fruitful. Yet God Most High did not choose a better place for His House than this hole among all these rocks."

"God is more knowing!" said Abdurrahmân severely. Then, turning to me, he said, "True! the Land of the Arabs is barren. There is no tilth in her. But she is all minerals. In her are iron, and copper, and silver —even gold. Ay, wallah, all minerals!"

On Abi Cubays, behind the Mosque of Bilâl, there is a cleft in the rock which is known as the Place of the

Stone. In this niche, it is said, the angels secreted the Black Stone immediately before the Flood. The rock closed over it, and protected it from harm until the waters abated, when Gabriel unearthed it and restored it to its place in the Kaaba.

Beside the Maala, and bordering the main road, stands a small dilapidated mosque known as the Mosque of the Genii (Mesjid El Jinn). At this spot Muhammad, being in the act of repeating the dawn prayer, was overheard in his chanting of the Korân by a party of jinn. A subsequent revelation mentions this occurrence. It forms the beginning of the chapter entitled *The Genii:*—

> "Say:—It has been revealed to me that a party of genii listened to me, and they said 'Verily we have heard a marvellous reading, pointing the way to rectitude: so we have believed in it, and we will not associate any other with our Lord.' "

In this excerpt, as throughout the Korân, God is represented as addressing Muhammad personally. . . . "O Muhammad! Say to the world as follows:—It hath been revealed . . ."

The jinn are a race of beings supposed to have been created out of fire before the advent of mankind upon the earth. They partake of the nature of men and of angels, but are inferior to both. Like mankind, they are born, form sexual relationships, and die; and they need the sustenance of food. Like the angels, they are usually invisible to man, but they are able to assume human form or the forms of animals, and of strange monsters.

Belief in the existence of these or similar beings is

pre-Islamic among the Arabs, but it has been regulated anew by the religion of Muhammad; and most of the other Islamic races have used this fact to account for, and to perpetuate, many of their own pre-Islamic superstitions. An example of this is found in the fearful unnatural beings which are believed to infest the lonely jungles of the Malay Islands. A case of a jinnî assuming human form is cited by the Malay Abdulla, in his "Autobiography." This spirit masqueraded as an Englishman to the Malays of Malacca. He at first appeared to be an ordinary officer of sepoys; but each day upon the conclusion of drill, instead of leaving the parade ground by way of the gate, he jumped his horse over a fence, which Adbulla says was seven cubits* high. Every day he did this marvellous thing, and the Malays became amazed, so that one man said to another: "This one is not of mankind," and another said: "This Englishman is of a truth a jinnî, and that is the reason he is able to do this act."

Upon the revelation of Islâm, many of the jinn became Muslims (*vide supra* the Korânic excerpt quoted), while others continued in unbelief. The latter are called shayâtîn (i.e. devils. Some of their activities have been narrated in Chapter XII). The captain of the devils is Iblîs, of whom it is doubtful whether he is himself of jinn-kind or is a fallen angel. In Chapter *The Cow* it is written:—

> "When we said to the *angels* 'Bow ye down to Adam!' they bowed down; all, save Iblîs. He refused, and was arrogant, and became of the unbelievers."

Similar passages occur in Chapters *El A'raf* (the

* More than ten feet.

partition between Paradise and Jehannam), *El Hijr* (the name of a city of the tribe of Thamûd, at present known as Madâin Sâlih, or the Cities of the Prophet Sâlih), *El Isra* (the Night Journey), and *Sâd* (a letter of the alphabet—hard s. Its meaning here is unknown).

In Chapter *The Cave* the story goes as follows:—

> "When We said to the *angels* 'Bow ye down to Adam!' they bowed down; all save Iblîs, who was of the *jinn*, and transgressed the command of his Lord."

From this it would appear that an angel may be a jinnî.

The word jinn is usually meant to imply the good jinn, that is to say, those who are Muslims. The bad jinn, who are unbelievers, are called shayâtîn (sing. shaytân), 'afârît (sing. 'afrît), or ghûlân (sing. ghûl).

The Mekkans believe that the shayâtîn are not permitted to enter the Holy City, though, short of that, they may dwell within the sacred limits of the Haram. They tell tales of 'afârît, locally termed Namnam, which, assuming the form of wolves, steal children in the Yemen by night. They also tell of men who steal children in those parts in order to sell them as slaves in Mekka. There appears to be more than a suspicion of a connection between these two matters.

On the left-hand side of the road to 'Arafa, at a distance of five miles from Mekka, there rises a mountain of a peculiar shape. An enormous steeply sloping mass, it is topped by a smaller mound of rock with almost perpendicular sides, and has nearly the precise appearance of a camel's back topped by its hump. Near the summit there is a small cleft or cave in the

rock, which is approached by a rough path. This mountain is known in history as Jebel Hirâ, but on account of the Prophet's having there received the first of the Korânic revelations, it is now known as Jebel Nûr (the Mount of Light). A tradition handed down from 'Âisha, one of the Prophet's wives, describes his first experience of revelation thus:—

The beginning of the Prophet's revelation was a vision seen during sleep. Whenever he saw this vision, it appeared to him as though the whiteness of dawn was breaking over him. Then he began to desire solitude, so having made ready a provision of food, he retired apart to the Cave of Hirâ, and devoted himself for many nights to the worship of God. Then he would return to Khadîja, and having procured further provision he would return to Hirâ for solitude once more. This he did until the revealed Truth came to him in the Cave of Hirâ. The manner of the first revelation was, that the Angel Gabriel came to him and commanded "Read!" Muhammad replied, "I cannot read." So the Angel took him and squeezed him hard, in order to arouse his energy, and then he released him, saying, "Read!" But Muhammad replied again "I cannot read." This went on until Muhammad had been thrice urged, and then, as he released him for the third time, the Angel said "Read! in the Name of thy Lord, Who hath created [all things]. He created man from congealed blood. Read! by the Most Beneficent—thy Lord, Who taught the use of the pen. He taught man that which he knew not." These sentences form the beginning of the Chapter entitled *Congealed Blood*, and are believed, on the evidence of 'Âisha's tradition, to be the first of the Korânic revelation.

The tradition goes on to relate that Muhammad,

with palpitating heart, went quickly home, and bursting in upon Khadîja, cried: "Wrap me up! Wrap me up!" So they wrapped him up, and presently his fright left him. Then he spoke to Khadîja, and told her what had occurred, saying: "I feared for my life." Said Khadîja: "Say not so! God will never disgrace you. Verily you are destined to bring together disunited kinsmen, to bear up the weak, to enrich the destitute, to honour the guest, and to assist in combating the calamities which threaten the Truth."

A large well is situated in the wâdi which runs at the foot of the Mount of Light, and on the slope of the latter there is a stone cistern, twenty-five feet by twenty feet by twelve feet deep, for catching rain-water. The cleft, or cave, of Hirâ was formerly inclosed within a small building. This building, having been built with a domed roof, is now no more. No dome which has the faintest connection with any dead person may continue to exist under the stern Wahhâbite order. The reason is found in a tradition of the Prophet forbidding the erection of buildings over tombs. As such buildings usually have domed roofs, the dome has become the architectural abomination of the Nejders.

Some six miles to the south-eastward of Mekka, on the road to the oasis of El Husaynîya, a mighty mountain mass, known as Jebel Thowr (the Bull Mountain), rises to a height of over two thousand feet above the plain. Near its summit there is a cave known as the Cave of the Bull.

Muhammad, when persecuted by the inhabitants of Mekka, and threatened with death, fled from the city accompanied by the faithful Abu Bakr. Fleeing down

the Misfala, they took the road to Jebel Thowr, and climbing its rough and nearly perpendicular side, hid in the cave. The pursuing Curaysh are said to have passed near the orifice, but seeing a spider's web intact across it, they passed it by. For three days Muhammad and his disciple hid there, until one named Abdulla ibn 'Urayca came to them with camels. Mounting on these, the friends fled to El Medîna, where they were well received.*

Very few of the Mekkans have climbed Jebel Thowr, on account of the difficulty of the ascent, and because, prior to the Wahhâbî occupation, the surrounding country was always infested with dangerous Bedouins. It took me an hour and a half to climb the mountain. The thirteen-hundred-years old path is scarcely discernible in many places, and presents a series of small precipices. The cave is situated at the top of a spur, considerably below the ultimate summit of the mountain. Beneath a great boulder there is a small opening, just large enough for a man to crawl through by lying flat on his stomach. What the cave is like inside I cannot say, as upon entering its night-dark interior from the sunlit glare of the outer world, I was unable to see anything. I did not remain within long enough to become accustomed to the darkness, but giving up the attempt to make a minute inspection, I made my way out again by wriggling through another small fissure opposite to that by which I had entered.

Every person who enters Mekka, whether he be a native of that city or a foreigner, is under the obligation to perform the ceremonies of either the Hajj or the 'Omra (the Visitation). The 'Omra is a supererogatory

* See Chapter X.

duty to one who "intends" to perform the Hajj. But if a person wishes to enter Mekka, and does not intend to perform the Hajj, he must perform the 'Omra. It may, however, be shirked by the sacrifice of a sheep. The Muslim "intending" the 'Omra, assumes the ihrâm at the Haram limits, and upon reaching Mekka he performs the towâf, and the "running" between Es-Safâ and El Marwa. He then has his head shaved, and thus completes the ceremony. The 'Omra is performed at any season of the year, and at any time of day. Some of the more pious Mekkans frequently repeat it, especially on Ramadhân nights.

The boundary of the sacred territory runs nearest to Mekka at a place on the El Medîna road, called Et-Tan'îm, or more familiarly El 'Omra. It is to this point that the Mekkans resort when wishing to perform the rite of "Visitation." They usually assume the ihrâm before leaving Mekka, and since it is unnecessary for one in Mekka to go outside the Haram limits in order to ihrâm, their only reason for going to Et-Tan'îm is that they may imitate the Prophet, who at this place expressed his "intention" of performing the 'Omra, when he came from El Medîna.

Some time after the Pilgrimage, I performed the 'Omra, in company with Abdurrahmân and Sabri. Having bathed and assumed the ihrâm, we prayed the sunset prayer in the Haram, and then rode out on donkeys to Et-Tan'îm, passing through the quarter of Jarwal. Beyond Jarwal, the way lies through the Valley of the Martyrs. The track has been worn smooth by long use, and at intervals of four or five hundred yards there are square pillars, six feet in height, on which lanterns are placed during the nights of Ramadhân. These pillars act as sign-posts, and enable strangers to

find their way when unaccompanied by guides. There are several wells along the route, and at the western side of the valley are situated a few scattered houses, one of which belongs to the Shaybi. Another, surrounded by lote and tamarisk trees, belongs to one of the Sharîfs. Et-Tan'îm is situated on high ground some five miles from Mekka, and immediately beyond two wall-like pillars, similar to those at 'Arafa.

We performed ablutions with water drawn from a well, and prayed in a little mosque surmounted by three domes and open on its westward side. This being accomplished, we seated ourselves on a bench in the moonlight, outside a ramshackle coffee-booth, and ordered coffee. Moved to pleasant retrospection perhaps by the sweetness of the breeze blowing past from the north-west, Sabri made boast of an exploit of which he had been the hero. He said that, being with a party of friends on a day's outing in the Valley of the Martyrs, one of his friends had offered to wager him a guinea that he would not eat five pounds of meat, a melon of about the same weight, three loaves of bread, and a pound of honey, and then ride into Mekka and back again on a donkey. Sabri took the wager, dealt with the five pounds of meat, the melon, the three loaves, and the honey; secreted two limes in his belt; mounted the donkey and rode into Mekka. On the way he put a lime into his mouth, chewed it and swallowed it. Arrived in Mekka, he met two shaykhs at Bâb el 'Omra, who invited him to join them at their afternoon meal of fried meat and grapes. He ate with them, procured a written statement from them certifying that he had done so, ate another lime, mounted his donkey and rode back to the Valley of the Martyrs. On arrival there he had the satisfaction of witnessing

the incredulous admiration of his friends. "But," he concluded sadly, "up till now, not a smell of the guinea has come to me."

Then my companions began to lament the poverty of the times, and to sigh for their former affluence. How in the days of the Sharîf 'Aun er-Rafîg, though thieves abounded, "gold lay about on the ground waiting to be picked up."

Riding back to Mekka in the starlight, we passed again the grave of Abu Lahab, and then entered the Jarwal. Having performed the towâf and the Saaya, we visited the barber and then discarded the ihrâm.

Among the pleasure resorts of Mekka is a ravine at the south-eastern extremity of Jiyâd, called El Masâfi. In the narrow bottom of this ravine, a small stream of clear water flows for several days after rain has fallen in the hills enclosing Mekka on that side. In the event of rain falling at intervals during a period of two or three weeks, as sometimes happen, this stream flows constantly during that period. It empties itself into a small lake which forms at such times in the hills at the head of Jiyâd. The basin which contains this lake is sufficiently large, and subterranean percolation is sufficiently rapid, to allow of its holding the water which flows into it without over-flowing, save on the occasions of very heavy rain.

Our coterie assembled one afternoon with the object of making an excursion to El Masâfi. We were accompanied by a youth named El Khamîs (Thursday), famous as a singer. Upon reaching the upper end of Jiyâd, we climbed over a rocky hill, on which were perched a few houses, and then descended a steep declivity to the bottom of the ravine. Here we were

enchanted by the rare sight of a rippling stream. Many parties of Mekkans, with samovars for making tea, and some of their members smoking shîshas, were scattered about on the flat rocks all along the hollow. The sun having now sunk low, the depths of the ravine were in shade. Selecting a place, we seated ourselves; and Abdurrahmân proceeded to assemble the parts of a tin samovar, which he had brought with him in a basket. At sunset everybody performed ablutions in the stream, and all along the ravine the companies formed in rows facing towards the Kaaba, in order to repeat the sunset prayer.

After this they seated themselves and prepared their tea; and then, as the stars appeared like suddenly lit lamps, they fell to singing songs. El Khamîs possessed a melodious voice, and he sang his verses, tapping the time on his tin tobacco box, while the others joined in the refrain. Some of their songs are of an amorous nature, and some are religious. They usually start with a religious chant, and then proceed with the other kind. Many of the latter have a short chorus, which is at first repeated by the company with mild enthusiasm; then, as the verses proceed, they yell it at the top of their voices, clapping their hands the while. These pursuits are indulged in with the utmost delight and excitement. By such simple means the Arabs become informed with the most realistic symptoms of intoxication. They then perform antics in which men of perhaps no other race will indulge without the stimulus of wine. They sing the choruses at each other, holding out their hands the while, or gesticulating with them, while they laugh and leer precisely as though they were light-headed. Then one or two of them will rise and execute the lascivious dance which is regarded as being

proper to Egyptian women, while the others clap their hands wildly, or bang a tea-tray or similar object. All the while excited and obscene repartee is exchanged between them; and even the grey-beard will quaver out the tune with the youths. Suddenly decorum will re-assert itself, and they will sit again and commence to exchange normal gossip, while they sip at finjâns of tea, or inhale the smoke of the shîsha.

Our party had been badly frightened that morning by an aeroplane which had passed over Mekka, coming from the hostile camp of the Sharîf Ali, at Jidda. Three bombs had been dropped on the hills bordering the northern side of the Muâbda, with the object, doubtless, of hitting Ibn Sa'ûd's palace in the Abtah. I had heard from one of the government officials that the only damage which they did was to destroy the straw hut of a Takrûni, and slightly to wound in the leg an old black woman. I now told our company of this, and at once all their faces became anxious. Uncle Yûsef drew slowly at his shîsha, and its bubbling joined with the rippling song of the little stream as it hurried among the stones. The steep, rocky sides of the ravine rose above us, to where they became merged in the starlit wastes of the night sky. The moonlight picked out the yellow turbans and dusky faces of the Mekkans, so that they appeared like images raised on a dark background.

"Wallah, Hâjj Ahmad, we are frightened," said Hasan. "We went to the Haram when she flew over, so as to be near the House of God."

"Whether you go to the Haram or stay in the house, you will die if your hour has come," I said.

"Ha! good! that is true!" they exclaimed.

"You wish for straight speech?" said Yûsef to Hasan. "That is the straight speech!"

"But we are affrighted, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Sabri.

"It were better I had not told you of the bombs," I said. "Sabri will not sleep to-night, because of fear."

"Take up two girbas of water onto the roof with you to-night, O Sabri!" said Hasan sagely. "And if a bomb comes? . . . Up, quick! and pour the water over it!"

"Will that work?" asked Sabri anxiously.

"Allah is More Knowing," replied Abdurrahmân.

El Khamîs began to sing softly one of his amorous ditties; and at the end of every second line they all joined in the chorus:

"Night descending, cloaks the valley;
Come not, O Dawn! my beloved is with me."

Presently we wandered slowly homeward in the moonlight.

The Mekkans frequently form parties, and hiring or borrowing a house which has a garden or courtyard, they spend the whole day there—eating, drinking tea, smoking, singing songs, and telling tales. Before the Wahhâbî invasion, such parties occasionally made use of intoxicating liquors, and when under the influence of the resulting inebriation, pæderasty was sometimes practised among them. Women are never admitted to a gathering of men. Among the Mekkans, as in other communities, there are persons who are addicted to vicious practices; but the Holy City was never at any time the abandoned haunt of iniquity and vice that some writers, among them Arabs with Wahhâbî sympathies, would have us believe. It must be borne in mind that plural wiving, and even capricious divorce, slave concubinage, and one or two other practices which are repugnant to the

Western mind, are not sins in a Muhammadan country, but are normal proceedings allowed by the law, and are therefore not immoral even though some of them may be "disliked" (makrûh). During my residence in Mekka, I observed less of the obvious signs of indecorum than I have seen in any other town which I have visited. I am convinced that this fact was not wholly accounted for by the presence of the Wahhâbîs. Several individuals were imprisoned for being in possession of spirituous liquor, and one for being found in the company of a woman who was not his wife. A case occurred of a man being murdered in the course of a game of cards, played for money. In Mekka, murder is a compound crime. In addition to being wilful manslaughter, it is a violation of the law of sanctuary.

Those who knew Mekka both in Turkish times and in the time of King Husayn agree that the Arab sovereign was a strictly moral man. The vices of drinking, gambling, prostitution, pæderasty, and so on, to which certain classes of the Mekkans were addicted during the Turkish régime, were sternly punished by King Ḥusayn. His faults appear to have been merely Arab characteristics of temperament, carried to an uncomfortable extreme. He is blamed for his ambition, vainglorious pride, obstinacy and avarice. He was a Muhammadan of some learning, and scrupulous in the observance of his religious duties; but the sudden rise in his fortunes, as an ally of the victors in the Great War, unbalanced him and over-shadowed those qualities of mellow wisdom and tranquillity which are the most charming attributes, and the greatest strength, of one who is advanced in years.

The favourite pleasure-resort of the Mekkans is Et-Tâif. In the hot months, unless the Pilgrimage occurs in that season, all those who can afford the expense go to the hill town, where they may saunter among orchards of fruit trees and by the side of green fields of growing grain, which are little inferior in luxuriance to the cultivated districts of Syria.

At a distance of some twelve miles to the south-eastward of Mekka there is an oasis known as El Husaynîya. It belongs to the Sharîfian family of Dawi Ghâlib. Having been invited by a member of that family to visit the oasis, I set off one morning accompanied by Abd esh-Shukûr, mounted on donkeys. Riding down the Misfala we passed Birkat Mâjid, and soon afterwards turned off to the left over a narrow pass. The track wound through several sandy valleys in succession, until finally it began to rise gently, and we emerged upon a broad plain covered sparsely with grey-green camel grass. The road passed along at the foot of Jebel Thowr, and presently, breasting the highest point of the plain, we saw before us a far-reaching valley sloping gradually to the oasis. The slopes of the hills bore a thin film of vegetation—the sudden result of the rains—and the bottoms of the ravines were filled with young herbage, set between the black and yellow rocks and sand. This coming to life of the sun-scorched desert is almost as sudden as the clearing of summer skies after a storm. The wilderness was dead a few days ago, the thorn bushes dry and black; even the camel grass had turned a faded yellow. Now the hollows were green, and the scrub on the hill-sides was covered with shoots. This is one of the few surprises of pleasure which Arabia gives to the

traveller. "God sendeth down water from the sky, and maketh the earth to live after that it was dead," says the Korân. Green finches fluttered about, and lizards of aquamarine, a foot long, sunned themselves on the rocks.

Almost as quickly as this spring herbage appears in the burning valleys about Mekka, it disappears again. To-day it is in its virgin hue; in a week's time, failing new rain, the Arabian sun will have turned it yellow and dry.

At the oasis we found five sons of Sharaf Pasha. They were living in a square canvas tent pitched within the walls of a ruined house on the side of a low hill. One of them, with the magnanimity displayed by these noble families of the Arabs, refused to allow Abd esh-Shukûr to attend to my mount, but led it away himself. Inside the tent the ground was furnished with carpets, upon which were deposited several camel saddles and a pile of small mattresses. A number of rifles and swords hung from the tent-poles.

The oasis of El Husaynîya lies in the bottom of a great basin in the hills. This basin is some six or seven miles in diameter. A perennial spring, issuing from a point in the foothills on its north-eastern side, sends a constant, though not a copious, stream of water down into the oasis. The latter lies in an extremely low position, and is famed for the insalubrity of its atmosphere, and for the great numbers of mosquitos which infest it. The oasis is separated into three parts by two low hills which lie in the bottom of the basin, with an interval of a mile between them. These two hills, and the three patches of cultivation, lie in a straight line, extending roughly from west to east. The most westerly part of the oasis, which is also the largest, is

properly known as El Husaynîya. The central part, which lies between the two hills, bears the name El Buhayrîya, and the eastern part is called El Mânaîya.

The water from the spring flows through a small stone aqueduct, which passes along the southern extremities of El Mânaîya and El Buhayrîya until it reaches El Husaynîya. At each of the three patches of cultivation, the aqueduct is fitted with a water-gate.

The area of El Husaynîya may be forty acres, and that of the other two parts twenty acres each. There is a much larger area of ground which is capable of being cultivated, but the available water-supply is insufficient for more than the eighty acres which are tilled.

This oasis has been cultivated from time immemorial, and it is second only to Wâdi Fâtîma in importance as a source of Mekka's vegetable supply. Hibiscus, egg-plant, radishes, tomatoes, vegetable marrows, spinach, and the mallow plant called mulûkîya, are grown here, besides birsîm for horse and donkey fodder. There are a few date palms and banana trees, but no other fruits. Mekka depends for its fruit supply on the orchards of Et-Tâif. A number of tiny stone huts, the habitations of the peasants, are scattered about the plain.

The eldest of the five brothers, Sharîf Râjih by name, told me that in the time of Abdul Muttalib, Sharîf of Mekka in 1297 A.H., petrol had been discovered near the eastern part of the oasis. By order of the Sharîf, the hole from which the oil flowed was closed again, and its exact position was now unknown. There is also a well in one of the valleys running eastward towards Jebel Kurâ, which emits the odour of

petroleum, and the water of which is defiled by an oily scum. Abdul Muttalib's reason for ordering the obliteration of the signs of petrol was the fear, which is universal among the Muhammadans, that the known presence of minerals would attract unbelievers into the sacred territory.

The oasis was improved by the warlike Ghâlib, Sharîf of Mekka, 1202-1227 A.H., who built a small castle in the midst of the western part. He also built several watch-towers on the foothills which overlook the plain. Ghâlib did not rely solely upon the Arab tribes to fight his battles. He is said to have purchased several thousands of slaves, whom he caused to be trained in the use of arms. Râjih, speaking with pride of his ancestor Ghâlib, said that he never moved out of Mekka without an escort of a thousand armed slaves or mamlûks. He made war on the Sultân of Dar'ayya in Nejd, thereby bringing upon the Hijâz the first Wahhâbî invasion, in 1802 A.D. When the Wahhâbîs entered Mekka, they sent a detachment to destroy Ghâlib's castle in El Husaynîya. The stronghold was defended by four hundred of the Sharîf's military slaves, who refused to surrender. After a siege of six months it was taken, and every soul in it was then put to the sword. The castle was demolished by the Nejders, and has remained in ruins ever since.

Having lunched with the ashrâf and walked round the fields of growing vegetables, and inspected a couple of horses, one of which, a hollow-backed grey of uncertain age, formerly belonged to King Husayn, I mounted and rode back through the cold evening air with Abd esh-Shukûr to Mekka.

Beyond El Husaynîya, in the opposite direction, the road passes by way of Baydhâ and Saadîya to El Lîth.

XIX

FIRST DEPARTURE FROM MEKKA

DURING the latter half of November and the early part of December of 1925, large numbers of Wahhâbîs came into Mekka from the east. They came in fives, and in tens: they came in parties of several hundreds. The valley of El Abtah, from Ibn Sa'ûd's palace to the dam at the foot of Jebel Nûr, was crowded with their tents and dromedaries, their saddlery and arms. Large numbers of these warriors were sent on to the army besieging Jidda, the headquarters of which were at Er-Raghâma, a place on the Mekka road at a distance of six or seven miles from the besieged town. Every day new levies of these wild Bedouins came riding in on their deluls in a ceaseless stream—summoned from the wilderness by the messengers of Ibn Sa'ûd. Eager they looked, but stern; their loot-lust held in check for the moment. In their ordinary existence, the Ikhwân care little for the goods of this world. Some of them, in their moments of religious enthusiasm are said to have given away their camels and other property and to have found a new pride in possessing nothing in the world save the clothes they wore. But when war is in the air, the old hereditary instinct stirs within them, and masters their asceticism. This was amply demonstrated by the circumstances which attended the capture of Et-Tâif; although Ibn Sa'ûd and his minions sought to exonerate the Ikhwân from responsibility by throwing the blame for the murder

and rapine which occurred upon the freelance Bedouins who joined them in the attack. To the inherent lust for plunder, has been added, in the case of the Wahhâbîs, a lust of violence against all who do not see eye to eye with them in matters of religious practice.

Riding, one day, beyond the Abtah, I had stopped my donkey for a moment in order to look at a half-ruined house built by the Sharîf Ghâlib. A Wahhâbî, passing on foot, accosted me with the remark: "You think this a good house?" He probably thought that I was worshipping the stones, or communing with the spirit of the departed Ghâlib. Many have been cut across the head with a camel-stick for arousing a similar suspicion.

"No, my boy!" I replied. "It is a disgusting house."

"Are you of the people of Mekka?" he asked me next. His face still wore the dour scowl which the sun, and disapproval of the world in general, give to the brothers' faces. They may not harbour admiration for anything in this wicked world, for fear they should "associate" other things with Allah. I have sometimes wondered what a Wahhâbî does and says when he makes love to his wife.

"No!" I told the brother. "I am from the north." Then I said: "Tell me about the way of the Brethren in religion."

"We serve none other than God!" he replied, "and we do not associate anything with Him!"

"Only thus?" I commented. "But what say you concerning tombs?"

Intently he eyed me, his stern eyes flashing distrust; from underneath his dirty red kefîya flowed the long rusty ringlets of his hair.

I smiled broadly and took his hand. "I like the Ikhwân," I said. At once his expression softened, and he too smiled. Arabs, fickle as the wind, they are easily won over to gentleness, and as easily goaded to murder.

"I am an ignorant man," said he. "I know nothing."

This was the speech which had been put into their mouths for use in their intercourse with foreign hâjjis and Mekkans; for their Sultân desired no gratuitous bloodshed. I could get no further word on religious matters from my friend, and upon enquiring his name I was answered: "I am a brother of the Brethren." Sad to relate, all this strangeness is merely a result of ignorance of the world, added to the skilful manipulation* of religious teaching by their leaders. A highly educated religious fanatic may be a magnificent being, but liberal education and liberal diet would merely turn the Ikhwân into effendis.† A Nejder from the Wahhâbî province of El 'Âridh who had studied in Egypt and travelled in India and Java, and whom I met in Mekka, was far more enthusiastic in his praise of western civilization—knives, forks, chairs and pictures, included—than are some Europeans.

On the fifth of December, El Medîna surrendered to the Wahhâbî forces, and a fortnight later the Sharîf Alî ordered Jidda to be surrendered also, and himself took refuge on a British warship. There is no doubt that Ibn Sa'ûd had at last made up his mind to

* By unduly stressing certain Korânic verses while passing lightly over others.

† In the Levant, the Turkish word "effendi" means "gentleman," in the sense of a man who is smartly dressed and superficially polite. The effendis of Egypt and Syria are those who wear European suits and tarbûshes, while those who wear jubbas and turbans are termed "shaykhs."

attempt the storming of the town, which his Bedouins had had under siege for fifteen months. There would have been a good deal of bloodshed, but had Ali possessed a considerable number of machine guns, handled by resolute men, the Ikhwân would probably have failed in the attack, as they possessed no artillery capable of seriously damaging the walls.

I had now been confined in Mekka for more than six months, and the thought of the open desert, with its clean air as of the sea, appealed to me every day more insistently. Sometimes, standing in the depth of the Mekkan valley, I looked upward to see clouds flying over the rim of the basin. Beyond the walls of the imprisoned city, winds came buoyantly from the unseen horizons; but down where I stood stagnation reigned. Again clouds would blow across the sky—like banners rallying to freedom out on the open plains. The hour of departure had come. Sitting in a niche in the Haram wall, I conferred with one Ali, a Bedouin of the tribe of 'Atayba, who had settled in Mekka as a dealer in livestock. He would accompany me to the upland oasis of Et-Tâif, and would hire camels for our journey. I had long wished to visit Et-Tâif, the place of orchards and rose-gardens; but I had become so interested in Mekka and her people that even the humid heat of the autumn could not drive me away from the Holy City. El Medîna, the second of my great objectives, was now open; but nevertheless, I determined that I would journey up to Et-Tâif and return again to Mekka, before setting out for the Prophet's City.

Upon a Friday, after the midday prayer, I mounted the crumbling stone stairs of the school el Madrassat el Fakhrîya, which stands beside the Bâb Ibrâhîm,

in order to visit an acquaintance who was employed as a schoolmaster there. As we sat sipping tea beside a window looking into the Haram, we were surprised to observe a sudden rush of people towards Bâb es-Safâ. They were evidently attracted by something which was happening near that gate.

Rising, we descended the steps and passed into the Haram. Making our way towards Bâb es-Safâ, we came upon a great press of Mekkans and Bedouins. In the midst of them was one of the Haram preachers, perched upon a little wooden platform or pulpit, apparently addressing the multitude. Elbowing our way into the crowd, we were able to see Ibn Sa'ûd sitting in a prepared place near the gate. The preacher was addressing to the Sultân a speech of adulation. Presently he made an end, and then several of the Ashrâf, the Shaybi, and other prominent Mekkans in turn, took the Sultân's hand and acknowledged him King of the Hijâz. Ibn Sa'ûd received these advances with his usual cordial smile, and upon the conclusion of the ceremony he rose, and accompanied by his armed guards, made his way slowly through the crowd towards the Kaaba and proceeded to perform the towâf. Having completed this, and prayed two prostrations in the Makâm Ibrâhîm, he left the Mosque and went to the Hamîdîya where he held a general reception.

Instead of following the crowd to the Hamîdîya, I seated myself in the cloisters with my companion. The sun had lost something of its summer savagery, and the air was cool. Suddenly one of the old guns in the Fort of Jiyâd boomed, and was immediately followed by another on Jebel Hindi. The troops of the garrison were saluting the new king. A hundred and one times the peace of the city was broken.

An old shaykh, named Umar Balâtas, who taught Malay students, hobbled up and sat down beside me. Having made himself comfortable, he gave thanks to God, and fumbled for his string of beads.

"What is this gunning?" said he. "Think you that God has need of guns in His City?"

We murmured sympathetically.

"These fools have acclaimed the Sa'ûdi," he continued. "But of a truth, they love him not. Why do they acclaim him? I tell you, merely for personal advantage."

"Nothing against them," said my friend mildly, "kingship belongs to God alone."

"No other," said Umar. "The rule of the Turks has passed away; the rule of El Husayn has passed away; the rule of the Sa'ûdí will pass away; but the rule of God remains—He is the Everlasting."

They murmured praise to The Everlasting God, while the decrepit guns in the forts still crashed out. A young sharîf of my acquaintance, named Zayd, approached and sat down with us. He was accompanied by another, wearing the white turban of the scholar.

We touched hands.

"They have acclaimed the Sa'ûdi," said Zayd.

"The curse of God on the Sa'ûdi," said his companion with careful venom.

"But security!" said my friend the schoolmaster. "Was there, in the days of the Turks or in the days of El Husayn, protection such as this? We heard of one who dropped his baggage on the Jidda road, and knew it not till he reached Mekka. So he went back to look for it, and there it was—lying in the way, Wallah, untouched! and the Bedouins riding away

from the track so as not to touch it—for fear of the Sa'ûdi!"

"True!" said Zayd, "and we heard from Abu Khâlid that his brother Hasan, the money-changer, came from Jidda with four hundred pounds in gold, and he was alone and no one accosted him in the way."

"Wallah, security!" said my friend. "We have never seen the like of it."

"Take hold of thy beard!"* said old Umar, "Sayyidna (i.e. King Husayn) was better. These call the Muslimîn unbelievers."

"God curse them!" they cried—all save the schoolmaster, who said: "We have no need of El Husayn, nor of the Sa'ûdi, nor of another. God ruin the houses of all of them—those who make war in His Holy Land."

Ibn Sa'ûd had repeatedly expressed his intention of retiring to his deserts as soon as he had driven the family of King Husayn out of the Hijâz. Had he done so it is probable that the Hijâzis would not have invited him to return as their king.

He is probably the best ruler that Arabia proper has known since the days of the first four Khalîfas; and if he keeps his balance, in spite of success, he may do her much good.

Some days later Ali informed me that he had prepared everything for our journey to Et-Tâif. He had hired a couple of deluls from a camel-dealer, who was taking six of these animals to Et-Tâif.

I performed the towâf, and after the hour of el 'asr I made my way towards the Abtah, where Ali was to meet me with the camels. I was accompanied by Abdurrahmân, Shâfîg, Hasan, Abd esh-Shukûr and

* As a sign that he will not be angry at what the speaker is about to say.

Abdul Fattâh. Abdul Fattâh carried a clay bottle of Zemzem water, and a poor man carried my saddle-bags and other gear.

I had put on a Bedouin mantle, with head-kerchief and hair-rope 'agâl, âs is the custom of some of the town Arabians when they travel.

Coming to the Hashîsh-smoker's coffee-house, we entered and sat on benches in order to drink together a parting finjân of coffee. Presently we went forth again, and wandered on to El Abtah, where we met Ali.

The sun was now setting behind Mekka in a blaze of orange, and a cold wind began to rise. The ravines among the black mountains, which bordered the broad white bottom of the valley winding eastward, were filled with blue mist. Above them, the sky had turned to pale green.

Forming in a row behind Abdurrahmân, we repeated the sunset prayer; and having come to the end of this, Ali and I prepared to mount. The two Bedouins, Kharîs and Talâl, with whom we were to travel, had already mounted; and now, driving two spare camels loose before them, they moved off into the dusk. The voice of one of them came out of the darkness, calling to us to join them.

"Drink, O Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdul Fattâh, offering me the clay water-bottle, "drink a little of Zem-zem."

I took the bottle, and having drunk, handed it back again to the smiling youth.

"With health," said he.

"God give you health," I replied.

Night was fast coming on. Already the stars glittered low above us—like lamps on long chains, suddenly let down.

I took their hands in turn. Shafîg commenced to chant the adân—"Allah Akbar: Allah Akbar: Allah Akbar . . ."

"With safety!" said Abdurrahmân. "God show me thy face in safety again."

"God keep you!" I rejoined, and again: "In the keeping of God."

Shafîg's voice, chanting the adân, still echoed in the chilly darkness: "I testify that there is no god but The God. . . ."

I mounted into the saddle, and at once the animal rose and moved slowly forward.

"Peace be upon you, brothers," I said.

"And upon you be peace and the mercy of God and His blessings."

Hasan ran to take my hand again as I sat aloft. Ali had mounted his camel, and now the animals moved on to follow their companions. A moment more, and the white-clad forms of the Mekkans had receded into the darkness.

"Lâ ilâha ill Ollawh!" The voice of Shafîg came faintly, chanting the final words of the adân.

A moment more, and we were alone in the dark valley, Ali and I, moving eastward.

THE END OF VOLUME I.

The Westminster Press
411A Harrow Road
London W9

00062045

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018